

# THE LAST SUMMER

*by the same Author:*  
**DOCTOR ZHIVAGO**

BORIS PASTERNAK



*The  
Last  
Summer*

*Translated from the Russian*  
by GEORGE REAVEY

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# INTRODUCTION

*by George Reavey*



BORIS PASTERNAK

*The Man and His Work*

A surprising and inexorable destiny is often the ultimate sign of a poet. For years such a destiny may lurk unsuspected in the core of his work but apparently beyond the periphery of his life. Then, as in a theatre, in the twinkling of a scene, he will discover that his life too is involved, that he is exposed physically as well as mentally to the camera of public inquisition. History has caught up with him. He is to be judged, and he is also the judge. He is expected to judge and to pronounce controversial sentences, to divide or to unite continents, to draw a veil over his aesthetic and to remember only the raw guts of his material. Having created an imperishable quality, he is threatened with

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perishable quantity. Will his garden or retreat ever be the same? Will he ever be the same to himself or to others?

What would the Boris Pasternak of 1914 or 1917 have thought of the Pasternak of 1919? Or the Pasternak who wrote, "I love my life and am satisfied with it. I have no need of its supplementary gilding. I cannot imagine a life without mystery and unobtrusiveness, a life like a glittering show-case." No doubt the shy, awkward and almost painfully sincere poet, the very Peter of *War and Peace* incarnate, whom I have met in the flesh more than once, still sets a premium on those golden silences which he has so much celebrated in his poetry and prose. No doubt the poet of Peredelkino is still most at home when cultivating his own garden and watching the play of light on the poplars, birches and pine-trees. Or isolated among the images hovering above his "contorted working bench" where the poet's pen has suddenly turned into a lathe. Or perhaps there is also a carpenter in Peredelkino? Anyhow, his cottage and garden have become another Yasnaya Polyana where many would seek as from an oracle

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some impossible answer to the riddle of the Russian soul, torn between Christian humility and gigantic pride.

The poet I learnt to admire from his poems; the man who made such a vivid impression upon me as perfect fusion of sensibility and open-heartedness when I met him in Paris and Moscow; the man and author with whom I have corresponded since 1914; this tryptych of a poet has become distilled for me into an image like "mercury in the void of Toricelli" or the lightning movement of "a hundred snapshots the thunder took as souvenir"—images that flash, like so many others, above the pigmy "curtains" of our ruthlessly unimaginative and power-mad postwar (c. prewar) world.

I shall not resurrect all my memories here<sup>1</sup> except to say that I first came across Pasternak's *My Sister, Life* and *Themes and Variations* while an undergraduate at Cambridge. My first article on his work, with some translations, appeared in *Experiment*, Cambridge (1914)<sup>2</sup>.

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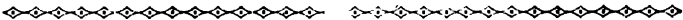
This led to a correspondence with Pasternak himself, as a result of which I found myself the recipient, among other things, of a very rare and autographed copy of his *Safe Conduct* and an authorization to translate this work, "a copy of which I (Pasternak) could only obtain with difficulty . . . A second edition of this book was being prepared, but it was forbidden a few days ago." Later, I met Pasternak on various occasions and particularly when I was attached to the British Embassy in Moscow during the war.

It was from Boris Pasternak's own hands that I received the precious signed copy of *Povest (A Tale)*, which I have here translated under the title of *The Last Summer*. It was likewise a rare copy, for it came from Pasternak's own library—*iz knig B. Pasternaka*. I can only hope that, in its translation, it will travel as far and as fast as the author's mind has travelled in images in space.

I must add a word about the original Russian edition of *The Last Summer*. It was printed and published in Leningrad in 1934—printed by the Second Typography, *Pechatny Dvor*, of



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the Polygrafkniga Trust and published by the Writers' Publishing House in Leningrad. It was approved for printing on March 3rd, and the chief editor involved was N. Tikhonov, a poet and prose writer of distinction. The original Russian title was, of course, *Povest*, and the volume contained seven drawings in the pointillist manner by V. Konashevich. As far as I can establish, *Povest* or *The Last Summer* was the *last* piece of Pasternak's creative prose to be published in the Soviet Union. *Doctor Zhivago*, as we all know, has a universal soul and world distribution, but no Soviet body (*noli me tangere*).

### 2

Boris Pasternak was born in Moscow on January 29 (OS), 1890. His parents at the time had an apartment over the gateway of a two-storied stone house with a coaching yard which was used by the local *izvoschiks*. The house faced the Theological Seminary, and Pasternak dimly remembers being taken for an airing by his

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nurse in the Seminary<sup>1</sup> Park. The neighbourhood—that of the Tverskiya—Yamskiya—was not too reputable: a Dostoyevsky or a Gorky might have enjoyed describing it; and Pasternak, as a child, was often aware that he was encouraged to turn away his eyes from or to close his ears to something or other not quite *comme il faut* going on in the vicinity. This quarter is named and reflected in parts of *The Last Summer*.

When Boris was three, his parents moved to an official apartment at the School of Painting under the charge of the Ministry of the Imperial Court. Here, from a balcony in 1894, he watched the funeral procession of Alexander III. Later, in 1896, he witnessed some scenes during the coronation of Nicholas II. The School had for its patron the Grand Duke Sergey Alexandrovich. The presence of the Pasternaks in this establishment, where they lived for the next twenty years, is very simply explained: Leonid Pasternak, the father, was a celebrated painter, and he was now on the staff of the School. He was not only a leading figure in the Moscow art world of those days, but also a close friend of

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Leo Tolstoy, whose novel *Resurrection*, he was soon to illustrate. The connection with the Tolstoys was intimate and of long standing, and the Pasternaks were among the first to be hurriedly summoned to Yasnaya Polyana upon the master's death in 1910. Boris, then a university student of twenty, has preserved some vivid impressions of Tolstoy in his coffin, just as he had remembered some of the old man's earlier visits to their apartment. Pasternak's *Letters from Tula* (written 1918) are bathed in ghostly evocations of Tolstoy's last moments at Astapovo. His father's friendship with Tolstoy has left an indelible impression on the poet: "our whole house was permeated with his spirit." And something of the spirit of that moral but tormented giant seems to have entered the soul of the author of *Doctor Zhivago*.

Boris Pasternak's highly impressionable early years were stimulated not only by his father's visual world and the aura of Tolstoy's moral atmosphere, but also very profoundly by his mother's musical sensibility. "I was accustomed to the sounds of the piano in the house, which my mother played artistically. The voice of the

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piano seemed to me to be the inseparable property of music itself." Mrs. Pasternak (née Rosa Kaufman) played at home, *chez* the Tolstoyes and on concert platforms, and her son absorbed a great deal from the rich musical background, just as he did from his father's associations with such outstanding painters of the day as Serov, Levitan and Vrubel. Thus painting, music, literature and high moral aspirations, all played their subtle and varied part in moulding the outlook of the poet-to-be.

In his eleventh year, Boris Pasternak entered the second form of the Fifth Moscow Gymnasium where Greek and Latin figured prominently on the curriculum. At the age of twelve, he broke his leg which mended badly and left him with a limp. This accident was to exempt him from military service in 1914. Even at this age his formal education was richly supplemented by extra-curricular artistic experience. Through his parents he met Scriabine, who produced a terrific impression upon the sensitive lad and made him decide to become a composer and pianist. This decision was generally approved of by his family and friends, and it looked as if

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Pasternak's future had been mapped out. For the next six years Pasternak's enthusiasm was centred mainly on music. He played his own compositions for Scriabine, who set the seal of his approval upon the youthful virtuoso. But Pasternak eventually gave up the idea of a musical career: a perfectionist, he concluded that his technique as a pianist lagged behind his powers of composition. The break with music was drastic: as he confesses, he even stopped attending concerts. His passion was diverted to literature—lyrical poetry and then prose. But his feeling for and training in music can be discerned in many passages of his poetry and prose. In *The Last Summer*, there are three passages in particular which evoke his musical background: "every time anyone attempted to doubt the honesty of his statement, the player splashed the doubter with some unexpected miracle of sound" (in the episode of Mr. Y); "it was wonderful to feel that one was less in a draught than just part of a straining bird with a Schumann aria in one's soul" (in the corridor of the train); and "After dinner, whole trays of broken harmonies slid downstairs"

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(Arild playing Schumann and Chopin).

But although Pasternak had abandoned the idea of music as a dedicated pursuit, his encounter with Scriabine, "whom I loved to the point of madness," left a permanent impression on his artistic consciousness. The mysterious Mr. Y has about him some of that quality of revelation which Scriabine had for the youthful Pasternak. Scriabine's aura was to haunt him for a long time. Scriabine had struck him as a veritable Proteus—elusive, astonishing and enigmatic. This Scriabine, who argued about good and evil, who attacked Leo Tolstoy, who preached the superman, and defended amorality and Nietzscheism—this Scriabine had revealed many new facets of a world as elusive as it was full of mystical possibilities. He had struck a responsive chord in one who had said of himself, "I was inclined from my earliest years towards mysticism and superstition, and felt strongly drawn towards the providential."

After leaving the Gymnasium, Pasternak studied philosophy at Moscow University until he graduated in 1913. The previous spring and

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summer he had spent at the University of Marburg and in Italy. At Marburg, he studied under Professor Cohen. He also visited Florence and Venice. This visit was to provide the Italian background for his *Il Tratto di Apelle*, which he wrote in 1915. Returning to Russia, Pasternak then completed his studies at Moscow University. The Serezha of *The Last Summer* is Pasternak himself after he has passed his finals.

Music, philosophy, and now literature. Outside the University, Pasternak was already becoming increasingly involved in the poetic revolution of his day. His personality and talent demanded a more than academic outlet. Poetry was the answer. His early verse is dated 1912-1914; his early prose follows soon after. At this time he was also absorbing the impact of poets like Rilke, whom he had seen vaguely in the flesh in 1900 and whom he now rediscovered in his work: Blok, the Symbolist; Anna Akhmatova, the Acmeist; Mayakovsky, the Futurist; Essenin, the Imagist; and Biely, the Russian contemporary of Joyce. Of the classics, Lermontov and Shakespeare had made a very

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definite impression. In this era of isms and nervous scramble after new aspects of reality and technique, in this competitive cauldron of slogans and apocalyptic expectations, the young poet was slowly moving to a definition of his own independent position. In 1913 he had also met Verhaeran, whom Leonid Pasternak had drawn in Moscow just as he had painted Rilke's portrait in 1900. In his *Safe Conduct* and his *Autobiography*, Pasternak has much to say about some of these poets and personalities, particularly Rilke, Blok and Mayakovsky.

Pasternak spent the summer of 1914 in the country and in Moscow. It was a summer full of new impressions, some of them ominous. He met Mayakovsky for the first time. He was, for a time, tutor in two different families, one a literary one and the other, a wealthy merchant's (Fresteln in the *The Last Summer*). He was also completing his first book of poems. In the background there was the seething and provocative life of the literary Isms. But August brought the stamp of marching feet. War. Exempt, Pasternak spent 1915-16 doing war work in various factories in the Urals. This is a rather



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mysterious part of his life, but some of it is reflected again in *The Last Summer*. That he continued to write is evidenced by another book of poems (1914-16). The outbreak of the Revolution brought him back to Moscow, into the vortex of political and literary events. The summer of 1917 was notable for his writing *My Sister, Life* which, when published five years later, definitely established his reputation as a lyrical poet of extraordinary power and novelty.

The Revolution and the ensuing civil conflict meant the end of Old Russia; it split the Russian intelligentsia and broke the continuity of the Russian literary tradition. There was a parting of the ways. In the early twenties, the Pasternak family made its way to Berlin. Leonid Pasternak, the painter, and his family, eventually settled in England. Boris Pasternak, the eldest son, returned to Moscow where he has lived ever since. He has been abroad—to the West—only twice and then for only brief periods. In the 1914's he discovered for himself the Caucasus and in particular Georgia, which Lermontov had described so romantically and

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which also made a lasting impression on Pasternak as some of his later poems and also his translations from the Georgian poets testify. Pasternak, who had been very active and prominent in the Soviet '20's and who had indeed exercised a considerable influence on the literary scene, did not seem quite to fit in with the new Stalinist era of socialist realism. He was gradually edged out after 1914. In the late thirties, he is the translator rather than the dominant lyrical poet—outwardly at least. Managing to survive the dangerous years of the trials as a semi-hermit, he inwardly developed into the naive yet granite-like sage of Peredelkino.

### 3

Boris Pasternak's lyrical poetry, so creative in spirit and technique, faced at its very outset a disintegrating world. Nobody in the early summer of 1914 could have suspected the turmoil and dislocation which lay ahead and which was to colour Russian life for decades to come. "The summer promised to be hot and rich. I

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was translating Kleist's *Broken Jug*. . . "When war was declared the weather broke . . . the first tears of the women streamed down." In *The Last Summer*, too, there is a nostalgic note which echoes in retrospect a sentiment of regret for "that last summer when life still appeared to pay heed to individuals, and when it was easier to love than to hate." But Pasternak, like most of his contemporaries, was too immersed in the immediate present and the near future, to foresee the monstrous possibilities of public pressure embodied in the newly weened modern Leviathan. He was too involved in the urgent demands of his own poetic sensibility, in his own subjective recreation of the world anew: "he had hoped for an enigmatic renewal, that is, a complete and irreversible renaissance." (Mr. Y, in *The Last Summer*). The literary background of the day was also rich in aspirations, prophecies and experimentation. The spirit of Heraclitus was in the air, as Andrey Biely might have put it. The world had become fluid: it flowed like water or danced like fire. The astounding images of Biely's prose, Pasternak's lightning verse, Khlebnikov's verbal

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assaults and Mayakovsky's drum-and-trumpet challenges, all reflected this creative and destructive upsurge of the verb. Blok was to define this phenomenon as "the spirit of music." It was also the spirit of unrest, of the strange stirring in the depths of the unconscious. In any case, it was the voice of lyrical poetry amid the stress of a rapidly disintegrating world. In the midst of many attitudes, moods and expressions, Pasternak's was an essentially lyrical, subjective and apparently somewhat hermetic voice. "In art the man is silent and the image speaks."

In his verse of 1912-16 (*Above the Barriers*), Pasternak had already rejected the romanticism and self-projection of Mayakovsky. The impact of Mayakovsky had almost made Pasternak abandon literature, but instead he abandoned the "romantic manner" and the conception of life as "life of a poet." In his next two volumes, *My Sister, Life* (1922) and *Themes and Variations* (1923), Pasternak consolidated his claim as a poet of subtle lyrical sensibility, striking imagery and novel technique. *My Sister, Life* constituted a decided break not only with the Symbolist school, but also with Mayakovsky.

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As Pasternak says, "it was found to contain expressions not in the least contemporary as regards poetry . . ."

Pasternak's so-called "sudden" emergence into prominence with *Doctor Zhivago* has appeared to surprise a good many people. Official Soviet circles have also tended to underplay or disparage him. But if we examine the critical estimates of Pasternak, both Soviet and Western, in the 'twenties and 'thirties, we shall be obliged to conclude that Pasternak's work could not be easily dismissed. On the Soviet side it had been variously praised by Mayakovsky, Ehrenburg, Tikhonov, Antokolsky, to name only a few. Fedin, a noted Soviet novelist and later, in one of the editors who rejected *Doctor Zhivago* for publication in *Novyi Mir*, had said in the *Literary Gazette* (1914): "Pasternak, the poet, is also working in the domain of prose. We prose writers are as proud of him as a prosaist, as you poets are proud of him as a poet." In my anthology, *Soviet Literature*, (London, 1914), I had written: "Pasternak, the most considerable living Soviet poet, remains influential but isolated because of his peculiarly

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independent attitude." And André Malraux had greeted Pasternak in Paris at the International Congress of Writers in 1914 as follows: "Before us stands one of the most remarkable poets of our time."

By the time Pasternak's *Collected Poems* had appeared in 1914, there was little doubt as to his influence or prestige. But this publication coincided with the rapidly changing atmosphere of the Stalinist era. The atmosphere became less and less lyrical and more and more slogan-ridden, and Pasternak turned to Shakespeare for both solace and salary.

After the *Collected Poems*, hardly any new Pasternak poems were published for a decade. Pasternak, the translator, managed to survive the nightmare period of arbitrary trials and mysterious disappearances like those of Pilnyak and Babel. He continued to write, but the avenues of publication seemed closed. The war, despite its other horrors, led to some relaxation of the inner tensions and to an increased stress on national unity and the "great Russian traditions". There was a revival of the lyrical note which could best express the new sense of per-

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sonal and national destinities. This note is to be found even in some of Pasternak's lyrical poems of the war years, which, apart from his translations of the Shakespeare tragedies, some poems of Shelley and his *Notes on Translation* (1914), produced two slim volumes of poems, *On Early Trains* and *Spacious Earth*. Many of these poems were marked by a graver tone and an unusual simplicity of statement. Yet in a poem like *The Thrushes*,<sup>1</sup> Pasternak seemed to combine symbolically his earlier dynamic manner with a realistic note of finality; and in this poem, he also reiterates his old theme of the poet's right to independent vision and song:

"Such is the thrushes' shady bower.

They dwell in woods spared by the rake,  
As artists should, tuned to this power.

Theirs is the way I also take."

The Pasternak of 1914 was no longer quite so isolated as in 1914-19: he was beginning to emerge again in public, and was receiving increasing attention and applause in the circles of the Soviet intelligentsia. The translator of

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Hamlet was now brooding on a major design in prose, as one of his dedications to me seems to imply. This was the Pasternak I knew in Moscow and Peredelkino. But after the Zhdanov Decree of 1919 he had to pull in his horns again until, assuming the thrush, he could soar briefly in the post-Stalin period. Now he is the author of *Doctor Zhivago* for which he was offered the Nobel Prize for Literature. But that is a symbolical episode which is both topical and historical, and of which we have by no means heard the last echo.

### 4

If life were not surprising and full of reversals, drama would be impossible and we would all be living in the strait-jacket of rational predictions. The pure poet, the apparently hermetic bard, would continue to revolve forever in his closed constellation, accessible only to the few of similarly attuned sensibility. But time and place and above all man himself, elevated to a higher sensibility by his natural gift and the continued exercise of poetic intuition, shape



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and will a more complex destiny. The peaks are there to be climbed as well as contemplated. But an ascent implies a descent except in the realm of the supernatural. Pasternak was never a poet or writer for the masses—so it seemed. But through *Doctor Zhivago* he has reached the world audience which paradoxically excludes for the present the poet's own compatriots; and now his other works are also in demand, and their qualities are being appreciated. *Doctor Zhivago*, that poet's novel and the novel of a lifetime, has radically altered Pasternak's relationship not only with the world at large, but also with his compatriots in particular. I mean this last in the best sense of an aesthetic and moral problem which cannot be so easily interred. The Pasternak of 1919 is in the moral situation of a Leo Tolstoy—of the Tolstoy whose novel *Resurrection* the poet's father had once illustrated. It is perhaps no accident that the theme of the resurrection as well as of the crucifixion, figure so prominently in *Doctor Zhivago*. If, as a result of all the *peripeteia* of life and history, the symbolic moralist has come to speak through the Prophet's burning mouth





*The Last Summer (A Tale)* in its final version is, like *Safe Conduct*, an example of Pasternak's prose of the middle period. It combines strong autobiographical elements with elusive moral comments on the objective and deteriorating situation of man; incisive psychological probing with a poetic grasp of far-flung correspondences and associations. The story and episodes would be simple enough if stripped of their vital complexity. But Pasternak loves to range without pause through time and space. A young man, Serezha, visits his sister in the winter of 1916. Place—an ancient town and factory in the Urals. The young man, exhausted, falls asleep and dreams of the last summer of peaceful life in Moscow and of his loves, spiritual and carnal. The young man is a budding writer, and he complicates his dream sequence

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with an allegory. When he wakes, it is time for supper and the family reunion. The greater part of the story has been the dream which was also an autobiography and a moral comment upon history.

Pasternak's prose has to be extremely mobile and pegasic to catch the fleeting impressions and relationships which finally can only be established and preserved in the more permanent actuality of the poet's images: the nature, which is thus mirrored, moves too fast with the speed of light or the lightning variability of human emotions to be ever repeated twice or in the likeness of itself. "At each step the sparkle of the silver-hued poplar trees kindled above the almost black grey of the drenched granite . . . . Their felled leaves speckled the pavement together with soiled scraps of torn receipts. It seemed as if the storm, before departing, had imposed upon these trees the necessity of analysing the consequences, and had entrusted to their fresh grey arms the whole of that tangled morning so full of surprises." Pasternak has the power of arresting and solidifying, of somehow personifying, these fleeting and, as it were,

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minute moments of impression—a gift early displayed in his poetry and later applied to his prose. “Art is as realistic as activity, and as symbolic as fact”. It is the painter’s eye and the poet’s imagination at work. Here all the clutter of unnecessary detail and all the boring transitions are quickly eliminated to bring one face to face as far as possible with the mysterious process of creation itself when the world appears to rise, as it were, from the dead ground of accepted material gravity. No wonder V. S. Pritchett was moved to write, “The key to him is his prose . . . Pasternak’s idiom was forged before; it grew out of the Symbolist and Imagist poets; it puts poetic and popular speech side by side. In *The Last Summer* one sees that Pasternak is one of the few writers in prose to create a language close to the voice of our aural, visual and scientific culture, where other writers . . . are still writing in earlier and now debased literary conventions . . . The whole work is less a story, though it is poetic, comic, dramatic and full of movement, than a concerto in prose.”

G. R.

# THE LAST SUMMER



## I

*" . . . that last summer when life still  
appeared to pay heed to individuals,  
and when it was easier and more  
natural to love than to hate."*

At the beginning of 1916, Serezha came to stay with his sister, Nata<sup>sha</sup>, in Solikamsk. For the past ten years the scattered fragments of this tale have kept coming into my mind, and in the early days of the Revolution some portions of it found their way into print.

But the reader had better forget about these earlier versions or he will become confused as to what fate ultimately befell each character. I have changed the names of a number of these characters; as to the fates themselves, I shall leave them as I had found them in those years

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in the snow under the trees; and there will be no difference of opinion between my novel in verse, *Spectorsky*,\* which I wrote at a later date, and this prose offering: the life in both of them is the same.

To be exact, Serezha arrived not in Solikamsk, but in Ousolie. A white pile, it glowed on the opposite bank of the river; and from the factory shore, from the kitchen of the doctor's freshly painted apartment, he could easily grasp on the very first day of arrival the why, wherefore and the purpose of the town. The sheer commercial masonry of the official buildings glimmered and grazed, dispersed by the blasting munitions of satiety, the powder of plenty, Reducing to neat squares this spectacle on the other bank—the handiwork of Ivan the Terrible and the Stroganovs, the doctor's windows shone brightly as though the fresh oil paint had been stirred and, in bags of creamy scum, spread over their wooden frames in honour of that distant perspective. Indeed, that must have been so—for the scant cracked palisades of the counting-house district had nothing to contribute.



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In the bushes, to assist the ravens, a thaw was picking and pecking. Solitary sounds brooded over the water of black puddles under the snow. The whistling of a shunted locomotive at Veretie alternated with the shouts of playing children. The thud and hack of hatchets on the site of the nearest construction plant distracted one from listening to the vague organ-like shuffling of the distant factory. This could be more easily imagined—suggested by the sight of its five smoking caps—than actually heard. Horses neighed, dogs barked. The abruptly interrupted crowing of a raucous cockerel quivered like a tiny splinter on a thread. And from a distant tributary, where the drowsy whiskers of swaddled willow-bushes bristled from the snowdrifts, came the provocative staccato beat of a dynamo. The sounds were scant and they seemed drunken because they rolled in grooves. Between them, the muted sentences of the wintry plain unfurled, solemn and rakish. Somewhere in the vicinity and, according to local tradition, almost in the neighbouring village, the plain hid the foothills of the Urals. The plain had concealed them like deserters.

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Serezha bumped into his sister at the door. Natasha was about to leave the house on some household errand. Behind her stood a snout-faced girl in an unevenly fastened short fur-lined coat. Natasha threw her shopping bag down on the window-sill and, while brother and sister embraced and chattered, the girl snatching up Serezha's suitcase, dashed like a whirlwind, in her loose shuffling felt boots, into the interior of the apartment and just managed, at full tilt, like a craning speeding hoop, to avoid crashing into the dining-room table. Very soon, beneath a shower of questions, Serezha began awkwardly and unaccustomedly to wash away with Kazan soap the grimy traces of his sleepless last forty-eight hours; and, as he stood there with a towel over his shoulder, his sister noticed that he had grown both taller and thinner. Then he shaved. Kalyazin the brother-in-law, was away at work, and his razor with all its accessories, which Natasha fetched from the bedroom, rather daunted Serezha. The bright dining room benevolently smelled of sausage. The fists of a thirteen-branched palm tree, fiercely pressed against the black lacquer of the

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piano, while the brass glare of the screwed-on candlesticks threatened, with its weight, to break the panel. Catching Serezha's glance, which slipped over the milky toilet tones of the oilcloth, Natasha said; "We inherited all this from Pashim, our predecessor. The furniture goes with the flat." Then, hesitating, she added: "I'd be terribly interested to hear what you think of the children. You know them only from photographs."

The children were expected back from their walk any minute.

Serezha settled down to tea and, submitting to Natasha, explained to her that their mother's totally unexpected death had shaken him badly. He had been terrified of her dying that summer when, as he put it, she had really been at death's door, and he had gone to see her.

"Of course, just before your exams. They wrote and told me," Natasha interposed.

"Ah, yes!" he picked up, almost choking. "Indeed, I sat for those examinations! What it cost me to go through with them, and yet now it's as though a cloth had wiped all that time at the University from my mind."

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Continuing to knead the gummy pulp of the calatch and sipping from his glass, he told her how he had begun to prepare for the examinations in the spring, shortly after Natasha's visit to Moscow, but had had to drop everything as a result of their mother's illness, his trip to Petersburg and much else (here he again went over the list). But then, a month before the winter session, he had pulled himself together for work, but the regular distractions, which were an ingrained habit since childhood, were the hardest of all to overcome. He felt offended that, when he said "one talent in the hand is worth ten in the bush", his sister failed to recognize the proverb which their deceased father had put into circulation among the family with special reference to him.

"Well, what then?" Natasha asked, hastening to cover up the awkwardness.

"How—what then? I forced the pace day and night, that's all." And he tried to convince her that no delight could equal such a race, which he incidentally defined as *the exaltation of no—leisure*. According to him, only this mental sport had helped him to master his inborn

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temptations, the chief of which was music, shelved since then. And to prevent his sister interjecting anything, he informed her rapidly and without any apparent transition that Moscow had been in the fever of a building boom when the war broke out, and that the work had at first been continued, but had now been stopped in places with the result that many houses would never be completed.

"Why never?" she protested. "Don't you have any hope that the war will end?"

But he kept silent, assuming that here, as everywhere else, talk of war, that is, of their total inability to conceive peace, would be a frequent topic, and that Kalyazin very likely was the chief spouter in this domain.

Suddenly Natasha was forcibly struck by the unhealthy anticipation with which Serezha ever more frequently and successfully had begun to ward off her curiosity. But she also realized that he was exhausted and, unconsciously trying to save herself from this mind-reading, suggested that he undress and go to sleep. But there was an unexpected interruption. A bell tinkled faintly. Assuming it was the children at the

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door, Serezha made a move to follow his sister, but, waving him away and muttering something, Natasha vanished into the bedroom. Serezha walked to the window and, placing his hands behind his back, stared into space.

In his state of exalted vagueness, he failed to catch the fury that was unleashed next door. Using every ounce of energy as she clutched the receiver, Natasha hammered some sort of pleasantries into those same spaces which spread before her brother's gaze. In the direction of the endless paling, which stretched at the far end of the village, a man was walking away with measured, heavy step, a man notable only for the fact that there was not a soul near him and that no one crossed his path. Mechanically observing the departing figure, Serezha saw in his mind's eye a wooded section of the countryside through which he had recently travelled. He saw the station, the empty buffet improvised from a board propped on trestles, the hills beyond the semaphor and the passengers, strolling, running madly and shoving, on that snow-heaped mound which separated the chilly railway carriages from the hot pies. By this time,

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the striding man had passed the paling and, turning behind it, had vanished from sight.

In the meantime, changes had been going on in the bedroom. The screaming over the telephone had ceased. Coughing with relief, Natasha was now inquiring how soon her blouse would be ready and was explaining how it should be sewn.

"Did you guess who it was?" she asked, entering and catching her brother's attentive scrutiny. "That was Lemokh. He's here on factory business and he'll spend the evening with us."

"What Lemokh? Why do you always scream?" Serezha interrupted her in a low voice. "You might have warned me. When one chatters idly, imagining oneself to be alone in the flat, and someone is working next door, it is naturally upsetting. You should have told me you had the dressmaker there."

At first the misunderstanding assumed some proportions but was then fully resolved. It turned out that there had been no one else in the bedroom; and that, when Natasha had been cut off from her even more distant connection, she had continued chatting with the telephone

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operator, who had severed the connection and who was sitting in a distant office at the other end of the village.

"A charming girl," Natasha added. "She's a dressmaker, too: she can't manage on her wages. She's also coming tonight. But that's uncertain, for she has a visitor from the front."

"Do you know," Serezha suddenly declared, "I think I'll really go and lie down."

"That's good," his sister quickly agreed and led him into the room which had been prepared for him on the receipt of his letter. "I'm amazed they discharged you," she remarked on the way, glancing sideways at her brother. "You're not limping at all."

"Yes, just imagine it, no complications, by unanimous decision of the board. What are you doing?" he cried out, noticing that his sister was about to spread some sheets and was pulling off the bed cover. "Leave it there. I'll lie down as I am. It's not necessary."

"Well, as you wish." She yielded and, glancing round the room like a housewife, said on the threshold: "Sleep your fill and don't worry. I'll see to it that they don't make any noise; if



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you oversleep we'll dine without you and your meal will be warmed up later. But to have forgotten Lemokh, that is unpardonable; he is a very very interesting man, a worthy man, and he has referred to you very warmly and correctly."

"But what am I to do?" Serezha pleaded. "I have never seen him, and I've just heard of him for the first time."

He thought that even the door closed after his sister in a mildly reproachful way.

He undid his braces and, sitting down on the bed, began to unlace his boots.

Serezha's train had also brought to Veretie a sailor who was on shore leave from the torpedo boat *Novik*. His name was Fardybassov. From the station he had carried his small trunk direct to the office, kissed a woman relative of his who was employed there and at once, crushing the ice and splashing water, strode with long steps towards the Mechanical Workshop. Here, his arrival created a sensation. However, failing to discover in the crowd pressing round him the man he was seeking and learning that Otryganiev

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was now working in one of the new and recently constructed workshops, he set off at the same pace toward the Second Auxiliary, which he soon discovered behind the storehouse fences, at the fork of the narrow-gauge railway. The track crawled like a nasty little hem along the edge of a steep slope and frightened one by its obvious defencelessness, for on the forest verge a sentinel armed with a rifle paced up and down. Abandoning the road, Fardybassov ran down the field, scurrying from hillock to hillock and disappearing in stagnant ditches of summer's making. Then he climbed the height, where stood the wooden barracks which differed from an ordinary shed only because it frequently threw puffs of steam, like snowballs, at the silence reigning here.

"Otryganiev!" The sailor on leave grunted, after running up the steps and banging the door post with the palm of his hand. "Otryganiev!" he grunted again into the depths of the structure where several peasants were dragging some sacks from place to place and a formidable motor, its flywheel seemingly immobilized in its lightning flight, raged and roared, protected

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from the open fields, as with a loose cover, by nothing but these weatherboards. Beneath it, the mad lever of the connecting rod ground its pistons and squatted, sank through the floor and jerked back its sprained leg, terrorizing the whole of this structure with its St. Vitus's dance.

"What juice are you pumping here?" the new arrival asked at once, by way of greeting a lame sluggard, who rose up in the doorway after hobbling forward from the machine on a withered leg.

"Yeremka!" This type had just time to fire back when he was at once seized by an attack of bitter, large-crumbed, *mahorka* coughing. "Chloroform," he pronounced in a voice drink-sodden to the point of tuberculosis, and then merely waved his hand as he experienced a renewed paroxysm of rattling in his throat.

"Tar-mixers, that's what you are!" the sailor exclaimed affectionately, waiting for the attack to die away.

But it never came to an end because, at this moment, two of the Tartars detaching themselves from the rest, quickly climbed up a wall ladder and, from above, began to pour lime into

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the mixer, which produced an incredible din and wrapped the interior in white curling, sundering dust. In this cloud, Fardybassov began to yell out that the clerk had devoured his time, his days were counted—and thereupon he began to urge his friend to go hunting for the whole period of his leave. For this he had made his way here through the open country from the station.

After a certain lapse of time, spent in affectionate jeering at the apprentices, those who had been exempted from military service, and the factories engaged in war work, Fardybassov, when finally about to leave, related how not so long ago, just before Christmas, he had been blown up on a German minefield one night when sailing out of the Finnish Gulf; but all this was lies and sheer bravado to do with personalities, for Fardybassov was on board the *Novik*, whereas it was another torpedo boat of the flotilla that had trained its guns, dug the deep, and gone down, winding round itself a watery noose of savage depth and tightness.

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Dusk was falling; there was frost in the air; water was being carried into the kitchen. The children came in and were shooed away. Now and then, Natasha would steal to the door. But Serezha could not sleep: he was only pretending to be asleep. Outside, the whole house was moving through the twilight into the evening. To the material slave-song of the floors and buckets, Serezha was thinking how unrecognizable everything would become in the light when all this movement was over. He would feel as if he had arrived a second time and, what was more important, well rested into the bargain. And the foretaste of novelty, which the lamps had already to some extent created, seethed and rumbled, passing from incarnation to incarnation. It inquired in childish voices where uncle was and when he would depart again, and, taught to glare forbiddingly, it very emotionally chided the quite blameless Mashka. In a swarm of maternal admonitions, it darted about amid the vapour of soup, flapping its wings at aprons and plates. No protests saved it from being bundled up again by fussy and irritable hands and marched out for another walk, hurried

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through the door to avoid admitting the chill air into the house. And not so soon, much later that evening, it became embodied in Kalyazin's bass irruption and that of his cane and his deep galoshes, which, despite his ten years of married life, had never surrendered to any instruction.

To induce sleep, Serezha obstinately tried to picture some summer noon, the first that might turn up. He knew that, if such an image were to manifest itself and he could arrest it, the vision would seal his eyes and rush snoring to his feet and brain. But he lay there for a long time, holding the spectacle of hot July right in front of his nose like a book, yet sleep still declined to visit him. It so happened that it was the summer of 1914 which had crept up, and this upset all his calculations. It was impossible to gaze upon that summer, sucking in its soporific clarity through clouded eyes: instead, it made him think, and pass from one remembrance to another. For this reason, too, we shall absent ourselves for a long time from this flat in Ousolie.

It was at Ousolie that Natasha had received her commissions, and with that list, made illeg-

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ible by minute jottings and frequent erasures, she had scoured Moscow on her arrival there in the spring of 1913. She had then stopped at Serezha's; but now from the smell of the construction timber, from the hum of the surrounding calm and from the condition of the roads in the village he imagined that he could see the very persons whom his sister had tried to oblige, when she had absented herself for whole days from her room on Kislovka street. The factory staff lived in real amity as one family. Her trip in 1913 had even been officially sanctioned, the husband's mission having been entrusted to the wife. All this nonsense was made possible only because all the links in that abstract chain, which ended in travelling expenses, were human beings, generated without exception by those crowded conditions in which, as on a tiny island, they had to huddle with their diverse degrees of literacy in the midst of three thousand miles of epidemically illiterate snows. Profiting by the occasion, the management had even invested Natasha with certain powers to negotiate on its behalf in order to clarify certain trifling misunderstandings, which could easily

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have been solved by correspondence; and this was the reason why Natasha had to frequent the Ilyinka, explaining these visitations in a very ambiguous manner. She enclosed these "calls" in emphatically comic quotation marks, letting it be understood at the same time that these quotation marks enclosed matters of "ministerial importance." But in her free time, and especially in the evening, she visited her own and her husband's Moscow friends.

With them she went to theatres and concerts. As she did in the case of her visits to the Ilyinka office, she gave these amusements the appearance of business, but which did not admit of quotation marks. That was because an important past had formerly bound her to the people with whom she now shared her visits to the Moscow Art Theatre and the Korsh Theatre. This past, available at will to enthusiastic interpretations with each new sifting of old times, now remained the only evidence of their former relationship. They all met, strongly welded by its remoteness, for they were now practising different professions, some as doctors, others as engineers, and others again as lawyers.



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Those, who had failed to renew their temporarily interrupted studies, worked in the offices of *The Russian News*. They all had families, and all, with the exception of those who had gone into literature, had children. Not all of them, of course, resembled each other; and they lived, not in a hive, but scattered among different streets; and, when visiting one of them, Natasha walked from the Kislovskaya to the tram stop on the Vosdvizhenka, but, when on the way to another, she walked along the Gazetnaya, the Kamergersky and so forth, crossing streets each more crooked, sinewy and more rag-market than the last.

It must be said that, except for one occasion in Georgievsky street, where she had to call on friends before attending a benefit concert at which the works of Chekhov were to be recited and singers would appear, there had been no talk of the past during this trip of Natasha's. And even on this occasion, just as soon as Natasha had begun to indulge her memories after finding in her friend's toilette case a red tie of the period of "Women's Higher Education" just as her friend, whom she had

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been urging to hurry, had finished dressing, and, turning their backs on the mirror where the resurrected images had begun to float, all three of them, including her friend's husband, rolled out into the green, glassy-chill air of a spring evening. They did not refer to the past, because they believed in their heart that the Revolution would come again. By virtue of a self-deception permissible in our day too, they imagined that the Revolution would be staged again, like a once temporarily suspended and later revived drama with fixed rôles, that is, with all of them playing their old parts. This illusion was all the more natural that, believing deeply in the universally popular nature of their ideals, they all held the opinion that it was necessary to test their own conviction on living people. Becoming convinced of the complete and, to a certain extent, environmental oddity of the Revolution from the standpoint of the average Russian outlook, they could justly be puzzled as to where they might recruit fresh amateurs and devotees for such a specialized and subtle undertaking.

Like all of them, Natasha believed that the most demanding cause of her youth had merely

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been postponed and that, when the hour struck, it would not pass her by. This belief explained all the faults of Natasha's character. It explained her self-assurance, which was softened only by her complete ignorance of her defect. It also explained those traits of Natasha's aimless righteousness and all-forgiving understanding, which inwardly illuminated her with an inexhaustible light and which yet did not correspond with anything in particular.

Her sisterly intuition told her that something was happening to Serezha. She was aware of everything, beginning with the name of Serezha's flame, Olga, and ending with the fact that the latter was happily married to an engineer. She did not ask her brother any questions. Acting thus from conventional discretion, she, like a luminary, ascribed it to her special attribute of caste. She did not question Serezha, but, breathing the awareness that his story depended on that thoughtful and sensitive principle which she herself personified, she waited for him to break his silence and to open his heart to her of his own accord. She laid claim to his sudden confession, awaiting it with professional im-

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patience; and who will laugh at her if he take into account that her brother's story had in it the element of free love, a dramatic clash with the conventional bonds of matrimony, and the right of a strong healthy feeling and, Heavens, almost the whole of Leonid Andreyev. In the meantime, bridled banality affected Serezha more violently than unbridled and sparking stupidity. And when once he could not contain himself, his sister interpreted his evasiveness in her own way and, from his reluctant omissions, deduced that everything had gone wrong between the lovers. Then her feeling of competence only grew stronger because now, to the above attractive inventory, was added what was to her the necessary element of drama. For, however remote her brother might have been to her as a result of his having been born five years and some months later than her generation, she had eyes in her head and she perceived unmistakably that Serezha had no inherent propensity for folly and mischief. And the word "drama," which Natasha spread among her acquaintances, was the only one not borrowed from her brother's vocabulary.

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### II

A great many things suddenly fell behind Serezha when, after successfully passing his last examination, he sallied into the street as if capless, and, overwhelmed by the event, gazed excitedly round him. A youthful izvoschik, whose raised boot had parted his caftan, was sitting sideways in the driver's seat, glancing an inch or two under his horse and wholly surrendering himself to the oblivious clarity of the March air, as he waited indifferently for a summons from any quarter of the spacious square. Blindly copying his free and easy attitude, the grey piebald mare stood blinking in the shafts as if the very rumble of the cobbled streets had bodily carried it there and harnessed it under the shaft bow. Everything in the vicinity seemed to imitate the horse and driver. Studded with clean cobbles, the bulging pavement resembled a crested document bordered with flower beds and streetlamps. The houses stood raised in a vacant eve-of-spring vigil as on a resilient base of four rubber tyres. Serezha

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looked round. Behind a railing, a ponderous door hung festively and canicularly on one of the greyest and most dilapidated of façades—a door which had just slammed upon his twelve years at school. At precisely that moment it had been immured, and now forever. Serezha walked home. A bachelor sundown of pinching chill unexpectedly broke upon Nikitskaya street. A frosty purple spread over stone. Serezha felt too abashed to glance at the passersby. Everything that had happened to him was written on his face, and his leaping smile, as expansive as all of Moscow life at this hour, dominated his features.

Next day he called on one of his friends who, because he taught in a girls' high school, knew what was going on in the others. That winter he had mentioned to Serezha the possibility of a post in the spring in a private high school on Basmannaya street, a post that would become available on the retirement of a teacher of literature and psychology.

Serezha could not bear school literature or psychology. Besides, he knew that he could never teach in a girls' high school because he

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would have to sweat too hard among the girls without any reason or profit to anyone. But, exhausted finally by all the excitement of the examinations, he was now relaxing, that is, he allowed the days and the hours to shift him about at will. It was as though someone had then broken a jar of pussywillow jam at the approaches to the University and, wallowing with all the town in the bitter-furred buds, he had given himself up to the sway of their tough, leaden folds. In this mood, he wandered into one of the cross-streets of Plyuschikha where his teacher friend lodged in a hotel.

The rooms had barricaded themselves from the rest of the world with a vast coaching yard. A file of empty cabs ascended toward the evening sky along the backbone of some fabled and only just cooled vertebrate. Here, more strongly than in the street, could be felt the presence of a fresh expanse, naked and heartaching, and there was much dung and hay. There was in particular a great deal of that sweet greyness, on the waves of which Serezha had drifted here. And just as he had been swept into rooms of smoky chatter, propped from the outside by a three-

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armed streetlamp, so he was also rushed in the following day's twilight to the Basmannaya street and into a leaden conversation with the lady Principal, beneath which bristled the branchy creaking of a big neglected garden, full of confidential feminine silvery-mouse and, in places, already raked earth.

Then suddenly, though it was difficult to say in whose honour, along one of those leaden turnings of the past week, he found himself living in a mansion, tutor to the son of the Fresteln family, and here he remained, shaking the lead from his feet. And that was not surprising. He was given board and lodging and, besides, a salary twice as large as a high school teacher's, a vast room with three windows next door to the classroom and the free use of his leisure when not busy with his pupil. He was given everything except the cloth mill of the Frestelns, for never in his life before had he found it so easy, in a soft hat (he had been given a large advance), after his tea and books, to descend from the marble halls straight into the newbaked heat of the sunny street which, with its parrallel pavements, hurried slopingly towards



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the square lying in hiding round the corner. It was in the Samotekh district and, despite the unfrequented character of the neighbourhood, Serezha had two encounters during his first walk. The first was a young man, who was walking on the opposite side of the street and who had been present on that memorable evening at Baltz's. There were two young brothers there, the eldest an engineer, and the younger had told him that, on finishing the Commercial school, he must do his army service, but he was not sure whether to volunteer or wait for his call-up. Now he was wearing a volunteer's uniform, and the fact that he was in uniform embarrassed Serezha so much that he merely nodded to him without stopping or crossing the street. Nor did the volunteer stop either, because he had sensed Serezha's embarrassment from his side of the street. Moreover, Serezha did not know the brothers' family name, for they had not been introduced, and he only remembered the eldest as a very self-assured and probably successful man, and the younger as more reserved and far more sympathetic.

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The other encounter occurred on the same side of the street. He bumped into a stout good-natured man, an editor of one of the Petersburg journals. His name was Kovalenko. He knew Serezha's works and approved of them; and, besides, he intended with Seřezha's help, and that of several other previously admired eccentrics, to renew his early literary efforts. About this pumping of energies and other such nonsense, he always spoke with an immutable smile. This smile was characteristic of him, because he seemed to detect comic situations everywhere, and this irony served to protect him from them. Avoiding Serezha's polite inquiries, he asked him what he was doing now, but, with the Fresteln mansion on the tip of his tongue, Serezha just bit it back in time and, lying quickly just in case, replied that he was engaged on a new story. And since Kovalenko was bound to question him about its theme, he at once began to compose it in his mind.

But Kovalenko failed to make this inquiry and, instead, arranged to meet Serezha in a month's time on his next trip to Moscow and, without stopping and while mumbling some-

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thing about some friends in whose half-empty apartment he was staying, quickly scribbled their address on a piece of paper. Serezha took it without glancing at it and, folding it in four, thrust it into his waistcoat pocket. The ironic smile with which Kovalenko had done all this did not say anything to him because it was inseparable from Kovalenko.

Taking leave of his well-wisher, Serezha returned to the mansion by a roundabout way in order to avoid having to walk beside the man with whom he had terminated the conversation on such a final and natural note. Moreover, he was amazed at the whirlwind that was now blowing through his head. He failed to notice that it was not the wind, but the continuation of his imaginary story, which concluded with the gradual fading away of the encounter and all that had happened. Nor did he realize that its theme was his own thought-evoking impressionability; and his emotions had been also stirred by the fact that everything round him was so wonderful and that he had been so successful in his examinations, his job and everything else in the world.

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His tutorship in the Fresteln family had coincided with a series of changes in the household. Some of the changes had taken place before Serezha arrived; others were still due to occur. Shortly before his arrival, the husband and wife had brought their quarrelling to a final life-long issue and had taken up residence on separate floors of the mansion. Mr. Fresteln occupied half of the ground floor, across the entrance hall to the right of the nursery and Serezha's quarters. Mrs. Fresteln spread herself over the entire top floor where, besides her three rooms and the drawing room, there was also a large ballroom with a Pompeian atrium and windows to both sides, and a dining room with an adjacent serving room.

Spring was early that year, and the noondays were warm and appetizing. At full steam, spring was rapidly forging ahead of the calendar and was inciting the household to prepare for the summer holidays. The Frestelns had an estate in the Tula province. Although up to the present the town mansion had been made

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draughty only by the airing being given to the trunks and suitcases on warm mornings, now the front door was already admitting ladies, the mothers of families, who nourished some hope of being invited to stay in the country. The old hands were greeted like dear corpses miraculously restored to the bosom of the family, but with fresh candidates they discussed both the stone wings and the timber cottages and, on taking leave of them in the vestibule, insisted upon the special qualities of the Alexinsky air, which was remarkably nourishing, and the beauties of the Oka landscape, which could never be praised enough. And, incidentally all this was true.

In the courtyard carpets were being beaten, and clouds in tallow lumps hung over the garden, while puffs of irritating dust settling on a greasy sky, seemed to infect the air with imminent thunderstorms. But from the way in which the caretaker all covered in carpet dirt as with a network of hair, looked up at the sky, it was evident that there would be no rain. Lavrenty, the footman, in a lustring jacket instead of tails, and with a beater under

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his arm, passed through the vestibule into the yard. And watching all this, breathing in the odour of naphthaline and catching snatches of ladies' talk, Serezha could not help feeling that the mansion was already dressed for the journey and would at any moment dive underneath a tent of tremblingly moist, sultry-laurel birch-trees. In addition to all this, Mrs. Fresteln's companion, without referring as yet to her dismissal, was preparing to go elsewhere and, seeking a new situation, absented herself even on working days. Her name was Anna Arild Tornskyold, but in the household, for the sake of brevity, she was called Mrs. Arild. She was Danish, and always dressed in black, and it was depressing and strange to observe her in situations to which her duties exposed her.

She held herself precisely thus, in a spirit of oppressive isolation, crossing the hall diagonally with large strides and wearing a wide skirt, her hair done in a high knot, and, like an accomplice, she always smiled sympathetically at Serezha.

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Thus, the day imperceptibly arrived when, adored by his pupil and on the friendliest of terms with the Frestelns—with regard to whom it was impossible to decide who was more considerate because replacing in this way their broken ties, they indulged in faultfinding in front of Serezha—with a book in his hand and leaving his charge chasing a cat in the yard, Serezha walked from the yard into the garden. The garden paths were littered with fallen lilac, and only two or three bushes in the shade still bloomed to the end. Under these lilac bushes, with her elbows on the table and her head bent sideways, Mrs. Arild was sitting and busily writing. A branch of ashy tetrahedrals, swaying slightly under its lilac load, tried in vain to peep over her head at what she was writing. The writer blocked both the letter and correspondent from the whole world with the broad, thrice-wound knot of her light chestnut-fair hair. On the table mingled with some knitting lay a batch of opened letters. Across the sky swam slight clouds the colour of lilac and the note paper. The sky itself, the colour of grey steel, cooled them. Catching the sound of steps, Mrs.

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Arild first of all carefully blotted her letter, and then calmly raised her head. An iron garden chair stood next to her bench. Serezha dropped into it and, between them, the following conversation took place in German:

"I know Chekhov and Dostoyevsky," Mrs. Arild began, winding her arms round the back of the bench and looking straight at Serezha. "and I've been in Russia only five months. You're worse than the French. To believe in a woman's existence, you have to attribute to her some unpleasant secret. As though, in the lawful light she were something colourless like boiled water. But when she throws an obscene shadow on a screen, then it's another matter: you have no quarrel over that silhouette and think it beyond price. I have not yet seen the Russian countryside. But, in the cities, your weakness for shady alleys proves that you are not living your own life, and that each of you, in his own way, is straining to live a foreign life. It's not that way in Denmark. Wait, I haven't finished . . ."

Here she turned away from Serezha and, observing a pile of fallen lilac on her letter,



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painstakingly blew it off. After a second, overcoming the pause, she continued:

"Last spring, in March, I lost my husband. He died a young man. He was only thirty-two. He was a clergyman."

"But let me say," Serezha interrupted her as he had planned, although he now wished to say something quite different, "I have read Ibsen, but I did not understand you. You are in error. It's unjust to judge a whole country from the example of a single house."

"Ah, so that's what you mean? You refer to the Frestelns? You must have a nice opinion of me. I am further from such mistakes than you, and I'll prove it to you at once. Did you guess that they were Jews and that they were concealing it from us?"

"What nonsense! Where did you hear that?"

"That's how observant you are! But I am convinced of it. And perhaps that is why I hate them so invincibly. But don't digress so much," she began with renewed heat, without giving Serezha time to state that, on his father's side, this blood, so hateful to her, also flowed in his own veins, whereas there was no trace of it in

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the mansion; but instead of this, and according to his original plan, he managed to interject that all her ideas about sensuality were sheer Tolstoy: that is, the most Russian of all to deserve that name.

"That's not the point," she cut in impatiently, hastening to break up the dispute and quickly moving to the edge of the bench nearer to Serezha. "Listen!" she exclaimed vehemently, taking him by the hand. "Your duty is to look after Harry, but I am sure that you are not obliged to wash him in the morning. Nor has it been suggested that you should massage the old man every day."

This was so unexpected that Serezha dropped her hands.

"In Berlin this winter not a word was said about anything like that." She continued, "I went to the Hotel Adlon to discuss terms. I was to be employed as Mrs. Fresteln's companion and not as her chambermaid, isn't that so? Here I am before you—a sane, reasonable person, you'll agree? Don't speak yet. The post was in a far land, in a strange country. And I agreed. Do you see how I was tricked? I don't know how

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Mrs. Fresteln attracted me. I didn't size her up at first. And then all this developed, on the other side of the frontier, beyond Verzhbolov . . . No, wait, I haven't finished. I had brought my husband to Berlin for an operation. He died in my arms, and I buried him there. I have no relatives. That's a lie. Yes, I have one, but another time about that. I was in a frightful state and without any means. And then suddenly there was this post. I read about it in a paper. And just accidentally, if you only knew!"

She moved to the middle of the bench, making a vague gesture with her hand at Serezha.

Mrs. Fresteln passed through the glass gallery joining the kitchen to the mansion. The house-keeper followed her. Serezha at once repented that he had wrongly interpreted Mrs. Arild's movement. She had no intention of hiding from anyone. On the contrary, having renewed the conversation with unnatural haste, she raised her voice and introduced into it a note of ironical disdain. But Mrs. Fresteln did not hear her.

"You dine upstairs with her and Harry, and with the guests when they come. With my own

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ears I heard them say, in reply to your perplexity as to why I was not present at table, that I was ill. It is true that I often suffer from migraine. But, do you remember the day when, after the dessert, you were fooling about with Harry—please, don't nod so gaily!—the point is not that you have not forgotten about it, but that, when you ran into the serving room, I almost died of shame. They explained to you that I myself had preferred to dine in a corner behind the door with the housekeeper ('she really prefers that'). But that's a trifle. Every morning I am obliged to attend to that quivering 'treasure,' like a child in the bath, to wrap sheets round her and then—to the point of exhaustion—rub her with cloths, brushes and pumice stone, and I don't know what else. And I can't tell you everything," she unexpectedly concluded in a low voice and, taking a second breath as after a race, she wiped her scarlet face and turned it toward him.

Serezha remained silent and, from his martyred look, she guessed how deeply it had all affected him.

"Don't comfort me," she begged, rising from

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the bench. "But that is not what I wanted to say. I am reluctant to talk German. The minute you really deserve my confidence, I shall treat you differently. No, not in the Danish way. *We shall be friends, I'm sure.*"\*

Having failed to warn her that he understood English, but had forgotten how to speak the little he knew, Serezha again said the wrong thing, answering *gut* rather than *well*. But Mrs. Arild, continuing in English, reminded him warmly and plainly (later translating this more coldly into German) that he should not forget what she had told him about the screens and the shady alleys. That she was a Nordic and a religious woman who could not tolerate licence; that this was both a request and a warning, and that he should bear it in mind.

### III

The weather was stifling. Serezha, with the aid of a grammar, was refreshing his scant and neglected study of English. At dinner time, he

\* In English in the original text.

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and Harry used to go upstairs to the ballroom where they fooled about while waiting for Mrs. Fresteln to appear. Then they would follow her into the dining room. Mrs. Arild would often arrive in the ballroom five or ten minutes before Mrs. Fresteln; and Serezha would talk loudly with the Danish woman until the lady of the house emerged and then part from her with obvious regret. The procession of three, headed by Mrs. Fresteln, would then proceed to the dining room and, the nearer they got to the door, the more the lady's companion was washed away to the left. Thus their ways parted.

For some time, Mrs. Fresteln had been obliged to put up with the obstinacy with which Serezha insisted on referring to the main dining room as the "serving room," and the room next door, where they carved the chickens and served the ice cream, as the "dining room." But she had grown to expect certain peculiarities from him, for she regarded him as an eccentric even though she did not always understand his jokes. She trusted the tutor and was not disappointed. He had no grudge against her even now, just as he bore no grudge against anyone. In a

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human being he could only hate his own antagonist, that is, a scornfully provoking and easy victory over life, one that had avoided all its most difficult and valuable elements. But the people, who could personify this possibility, were very rare.

After dinner, whole trays of smashed and broken harmonies slid downstairs. They rolled down and splintered in unexpected bursts, more rude and remarkable than any waiter's awkwardness. In between these turbulent falls, spread miles of carpeted silence. That was Arild upstairs, behind pairs of padded and tightly shut doors, playing Schuman and Chopin on the grand piano. At such moments, more involuntarily than usual, one had a desire to stare out of the window. But no changes were observable there: the sky did not move or shimmer. It continued to stand, like a sultry pillar, upon its fixed principle of rainlessness, while for forty miles round, beneath it, splashed a dead sea of dust, like a sacrificial fire simultaneously set alight from several ends by carters on the site of five goods stations and in ~~the~~ centre of a brick desert beyond the Chinese wall of the city.

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Everything was in confusion. The Frestelns stayed on in town, and Mrs. Arild stayed too much in the mansion. But suddenly fate justified everything just when the incomprehensibility of their delayed departure had begun to surprise everyone. Harry fell ill with measles, and the move to the country estate was postponed until his recovery. The sandy whirlwinds did not diminish, rain was not in sight, and gradually everyone became accustomed to this. It even began to seem as if they were still living the same week-in-week-out stagnating day—a day which had not been hauled away in time to the police station. So this day increased in strength and bullied everyone. And now, in the street, every dog knew it. But for the nights, which still breathed some spectral variety, one would have run for witnesses and sealed up the withered calendar.

The streets resembled wandering poppy beds with travelling plants. Dazed ashgrey shadows moved, with drooping heads, along softened footways. Only once, on a Sunday, did Serezha and Mrs. Arild have energy enough, after plunging their heads in a washbasin, to burst



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out of town. They drove to Sokolniki. However, here likewise the same fiery air hovered above the ponds, with this difference, that, while the sultriness was not observable to the eye in town, here it was visible. A layer of mingled dust, mist and locomotive smoke, hung, like an office ruler, across the black wood and, of course, this efficient spectre was far more frightening than the simple sultriness of the streets.

Nevertheless, this layer hung at such a distance from the water that the boats could freely slip beneath it; but, when the squealing young ladies changed from the stern to the oars, their young men, as they rose to let them by, caught their caps on this meaty scum. Near the edge of the pond the sunset fumed, hissing sourly. Its purple resembled a lump of pig iron, heated white hot and drowned in a bog. From the same shore, a slippery plaintively-resonant roar of frogs swam in bursting bubbles.

In the meantime, twilight was falling. Mrs. Arild chattered in English, and Serezha made timely responses. Ever more quickly they wound their way through the labyrinth, which would bring them back to their starting point and

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which, at the same time, was the shortest cut to the turnpike where the trams stopped. They differed sharply from the rest of the strollers. Of all the couples crowding the wood, this particular couple reacted with most anxiety to the fall of night, and tried to escape from it as if night were right on their heels. When they glanced back, they seemed to measure the speed of its pursuit. In front of them, on all the paths they trod, there sprung up, like a solid forest, something in the nature of the presence of an elder. This transformed them into children. They now seized each other's hands, now dropped them in confusion. At times they lost the conviction of their own voices. It seemed as if they were being thrown now into a loud whisper, now into a far off, space-cracked shout. In reality, nothing of the sort was observable: they pronounced their words normally. At times Anna grew lighter and more transparent than a tulip petal, while Serezha experienced a chest-heat like that of lamp glass. She saw how he struggled against the hot sooty draught to prevent it from pulling her in. Silently they stared at each other's face, and then painfully tore

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apart, as one might a whole living creature, this dual smile distorted by a prayer for mercy. Here, too, Serezha heard the words to which he had long ago submitted.

Ever more quickly they wound through the labyrinth of ingenious paths and yet, at the same time, came nearer the turnpike, from where already sounded the muffled ringing of trams, which were escaping from the empty carts galloping in full pursuit after them the whole length of the Stronmyinka. The jingling tram cords did a precise jig in the illuminated glass. From them, as from a well, a cool breath was wafted. Very soon the extreme and dustiest section of the wood stepped off in clogs from the ground on to the paved roadway. They had entered the town.

"How great and indelible man's humiliation must have been," Serezha thought, "that, having identified in advance all accidents with the past, he has grown to demand an earth, fundamentally new and in no way resembling that on which he has been so hurt or defeated!"

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In those days the idea of wealth began to preoccupy him for the first time. He was overpowered by the immediate necessity of procuring it. He would have given his mythical fortune to Arild and begged her to distribute it more widely, all of it—to women. He himself would have named several recipients. It would have been a fortune in millions, and those selected to receive some of the millions would have passed the wealth to new recipients, who, in their turn, would have continued the good work of distribution.

Harry was already convalescing, but Mrs. Fresteln remained constantly at his side. A bed was still being made up for her in the classroom. Serezha was now in the habit of leaving the house in the evening and returning only at dawn. In the next room Mrs. Fresteln kept turning in bed and coughing, and in every way let it be known that she was aware of his late hours. If she had asked him where he had come from, he would have told her without reflecting all the places where he had been. She sensed this and, guarding against the seriousness with which he would have replied and which she

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would have had to swallow as her duty, left him in peace. He returned from his absences with the same remote light in his eyes as from the outing to Sokolniki.

One after another, several women on different nights had swum to the street surface, raised by chance and attraction from non-existence. Three new tales of women took their place beside the story of Arild. It would be difficult to determine why these confessions had poured in upon Serezha. He did not go to confess these women, judging that to be beneath him. As if to explain the unaccountable trust which drew them toward him, one of them told him that he was in some way like them.

This was said by the most hardened and thickly powdered, the most promiscuous of them all, who to the end of her days was on most familiar terms with everyone, who urged on the izvoschik with unprintable complaints about "feeling cold" and who, by all the thrusts of her hoarse beauty, levelled everything she touched. Her little room on the second floor of a sagging, ill-smelling five-windowed house in no way differed in appearance from any of the poorer

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middle-class lodgings. Her walls were hung with cheap linens to which she pinned photographs and paper flowers. A folding table was hunched between the windows, brushing both sills with its wings. Opposite, close to a partition that failed to reach the ceiling, stood an iron bed. And yet, for all its resemblance to a human dwelling, this place was its complete contradiction.

The rugs, when spread under the guest's feet with a rare show of obeisance, invited him not to stand on ceremony with the woman of the house and appeared ready themselves to set the example of how to treat her. A stranger's reasoning was their only master. Everything in the room seemed to exist wide open, profluent, as in a flood. Even the windows appeared to be turned, not outwardly, but inwardly from the outside. Washed by public notoriety as by an inundation, the household things, without respect and in disorder, floated upon the broad name of Sashka.

But neither did Sashka pay any tribute to them. Everything she undertook, she did in motion, like a big swell and in the same way,

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without rise or fall. Approximately in the same way as, all the time, she threw out her resilient arms while undressing and talking all the time, so afterwards at dawn, conversing and pressing with her belly against the wing of the table and knocking over the empty bottles, she gulped down her own and Serezha's dregs. And approximately in the same way and to the same degree, while standing in a nightshirt with her back to Serezha and answering him over her shoulder, she quite shamelessly and unashamedly made water in the tin basin, which the same old woman who let them in had carried into the room. Not one of her movements could be foretold, and her cracked speech rose and fell at the bidding of the same hot jerky snore that knocked aside her locks and burnt in her quick hands. Her answer to fate lay in the very smoothness of her nimble movements. All human naturalness, weeping and proclaiming its shame, was hoisted here, as on a rack, to the height of a misery observable from every side. It became the duty of the surroundings, when viewed from this level, to be inspired on the spot, and from the stir of one's

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own excitement one could detect how un-animously, in all haste, the universal expanses were being ringed with salvation posts. More pungently than all pungencies, it smelled here of the signal pungency of Christianity.

At the night's end, an invisible nudge from the outside made the partition shake. Her "man" had stumbled into the entrance hall. His nose for a stranger's presence, which was his most assured income, did not betray him even when blind drunk. Stepping softly in his high boots, he collapsed behind the nearby partition as soon as he entered and, speechless, soon ceased to exist. His quiet couch probably stood back to back with the professional bed. Very likely it was an old chest. Hardly had he begun to snore when a rat struck at him from below with its quick, greedy chisel. But silence drifted over again. The snoring suddenly ceased; the rat grew alert; and the familiar draught ran through the room. Things on nails and clay recognized their master. The thief behind the partition was capable of everything they did not dare. Serezha jumped out of bed.

"Where are you going? He'll kill you!"



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Sashka croaked with her whole inside and, crawling on the bed, hung on to his sleeve. "To break a heart's no joke, but if you go—I'll get beaten up."

But Serezha himself did not know where he was rushing. In any case, his was not the jealousy Sashka had fancied, though it was invading his heart no less passionately. And if any moving bait to make a horse run has ever been cast in front of man to outweigh his reason and ensure his eternal motion, then that bait must be this instinct. It was this jealousy that sometimes makes us jealous of women or life to the point of death, as of a mysterious rival, and compels us to strive to be free to have the liberty to free her of whom we are jealous. And here, of course, was the same pungent smell.

It was still very early. On the opposite side of the roadway, one could already guess at the folding sheets of the triple iron sections of the wide granary doorways. The dusty windows showed grey, filled to a quarter with round cobbles. The dawn lay on the Tverskoy-Yamskoy, as on a weighing machine, and the air looked like chaff that was constantly being

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winnowed by it. Sashka sat at the table. A blessed drowsiness made her dizzy and bore her along like water. She chattered without stopping, and her talk resembled a healthy drowsing animal.

"Ah, Guilty Ivanovna!" Serezha quietly repeated without listening to his own words.

He was sitting on the window sill. People were already walking the streets.

"You're no medic," Sashka was saying, her side pressed against a board. She either slumped down with her cheek pillowed in her elbow or, straightening her arm, examined it slowly from the side, from the shoulder to the wrist, as though it were no arm but, rather, a long road or her very life, which she alone could see.—  
"No, you're no medic," she continued. "Medics are different. I can't make you out, but it's different when one of them walks behind me—I can tell him with my tail. You're a teacher, that's sure? Well, that's it. I'm frightened to death of catching 'the cold'. You're no medic, I can tell. Listen, you aren't a Tartar, are you? Well, you must come to see me. Come in the daytime. You won't lose the address, will you?"

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They were chatting in low tones. Sashka was either convulsed in fits of provocative bead-like laughter or overcome with spasms of yawning during which she also scratched herself. Insatiable like a child and as though recovering her lost dignity, she enjoyed this still hour which also made Serezha feel more human.

In the midst of their chatter, Serezha, having called Poland the Kingdom of Poland, and boastfully nodded in the direction of the wall where in a shining nest of other such photographs hung the glossy scarecrow of an amiable non-commissioned officer, thus revealed her earliest and most precious memory—the first cause no doubt of all that had followed. It was to him that her plump, outstretched arm, now lost in space, seemed to lead. But, perhaps, it was not him. Suddenly the dawn flared, like dry hay, and, like dry hay, burnt itself out at once. Flies started to crawl upon the bulging bubbly windowpanes. The streetlamps and the mists exchanging beastly yawns. Kindling and scattering sparks, the day got down to business. Serezha felt that he had never loved anyone as much as Sashka; and then, in his mind's eye,

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he saw—winding further away toward the cemeteries—the roadway spotted with the blood of slaughtered cattle; and the cobbles on the roadway were larger and more spaced out as they were at the city gates. Breaking away and departing, breaking away and departing—goods wagons, empty or filled with cattle, glided smoothly across this roadway. Then something like a crash occurred: the wagons stopped moving, and from the background rose a severed section of the street. Those were the unloaded flat-wagons moving at the same pace, linked together, but now blocked from sight by the dense wall of people and carts at the crossing. Here was a world of nettles and chickweed, and of the smell of field-mice but for the smoke. And here, too, was snivelling Sashka, playfully cajoling him with the humour of a six-year-old. Finally, last of all, and in a terrible puffing frenzy—as though questioning the bystanders whether they had seen the wagons go by—a black perspiring locomotive hurried past—backwards, backwards. Then the barrier was raised, the street flashed forward like an arrow and now, cutting into each other

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from the opposite direction, the loaded carts and human calculations would start advancing. And then, right in the middle of the roadway, the smoke of the locomotive let heavily drop the warm stomach of the monster, the fibrous thrice-tied sack—that same smoke on which the poorer folk of the suburbs nourish themselves as from a siphon. And Sashka stopped talking and watched how frightening this smoke could be amid the tea and colonial goods, the sale of cigars and tobacco, and sheet iron, and the policemen, while somewhere at that time a book was being written about her eyes and heels, entitled *The Childhood of a Woman*. There was a smell of oats on the road which the sun, to the point of making one's head ache, had stamped in horse urine. So then, in the end, (he thought, foreseeing her future) catching the "cold" she so dreaded, losing her eyes and heels, her nose and her reason, she will run in for a moment, before retiring to the hospital, and also the grave, to get the book which, as she had been told, had already described all this, every aspect of it, and it was only too true: she had lived like a fool and, like a fool, she would die.

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She could no longer walk the streets: she was rounded up with others by the cops, such was the outcome of her carelessness. She had been deceived and, idiot, she had caught it. How stupid could she be! That might have been all, but her name was not Russian and she was in a strange town. And there was the cop with his cloth-bound, braided notebook, jotting her down to be read. And so (the momentary pressure of a foul rotting dog) they put the lid on her. The cops looked a little more human as they escorted these fire-armed wenches, while the noble public held its tongue on a safety catch.

“What’s going on in your head?” Sashka asked. “Look at some of the other women. Don’t stare at me: I’m a lady compared with them. Now don’t worry about the time or anything. Maybe, you’ll say, people are asleep now. A lot you understand about the likes of us! Oh, you make me laugh, you’ll kill me, ha-ha-ha! Come here in the daytime. Never mind *him*. Don’t be scared of him, he’s meek, if you don’t rub him the wrong way. He’ll go out when you come in; or he’ll be just sleeping, as you can see, and

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you couldn't wake him if you tried. Why he's upset you, I don't understand. It would be a wonder if he turned nasty. Others have come and have taken no offence. Well-born gents like you. Well, I'm near ready, just got to powder myself, and I mustn't forget my bag. Here, hold it. Well, let's go. I'll walk with you as far as the Sado'vaya. I'll not be lonely on my way back, that I know. Day or night, you've only to wink an eye—they just swim, just swim, into your arms. You're not going my way? Well, all right, goodbye then, but don't forget. I'll go alone—that'll draw the stallions. You won't lose my address, will you?"

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The streets on an empty stomach were impetuously straight and surly. A lewd dove-coloured howl of emptiness still swept their transient, unpeopled length. Infrequently, one encountered some lean lonely cannibal. Far off, on the roadway, a galloping cab horse of good breed pounded along with its puffed out pigeon chest. Serezha strode towards Samoteki and, within half-a-mile of the Triumphal Arch,

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imagined someone on the pavement whistling after Sashka and her slowing down, as she debated whether the man would cross the street or she should do so. Though the day had barely begun, tangled threads of sultry heat, as nightmarish as crumbs in the beard of a corpse, hung already in the turmoil of the poplar leaves. And Serezha felt feverish.

### I V

He must make a fortune at once. But, of course, not by work. Wages were no victory, and there was no freedom without victory. And, if possible, without public notoriety, without the admixture of legend. In Galilee, too, the event had been local: it had begun at home, spread to the street and, finally, ended in the world. His fortune would be millions; and, if such a whirlwind should sweep over a woman's hands, catching up with even one of the Tverskoy-Yamskoy women, it would renew the universe. And there lay the need—in an earth made new from its foundations.



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“The chief thing,” Serezha said to himself, “is not that they should undress, but rather dress themselves; the chief thing is not that they should get money, but that they should distribute it. But, until my plan is fulfilled,” he cautioned himself (there was no plan really), “I must get hold of another type of money, some two hundred or even a hundred-and-fifty roubles.” (Here Nyura Rumina rose in his consciousness: Sashka and Anna Arild Torskyold were not far behind either). These were small sums of quite a different significance. As a temporary measure, he might accept such sums even from an honest source. “Ah, Raskolnikov, Raskolnikov!” Serezha muttered. “But what had the old pawnbroker to do with it? The old pawnbroker—that was just another Sashka in her old age . . . But the problem is—how to get these few hundred even from an honest source? I’m already two months overdrawn with the Frestelns, and have nothing left to sell.”

It was an early June day. They were already taking Harry out for walks. In the mansion preparations were now being made for the summer holidays. Mrs. Arild was often away on

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her affairs, which Harry's illness had interrupted. Then she was offered a post with an army family in the Poltava government.

*"Not Suvoroff—the other,"*\* Arild explained in a full voice on the stairs, too lazy to mount for the letters. *"I forget always."*\*

And Serezha reeled off a whole list of generals, from Kutuzov to Kuropatkin, before it turned out to be Skobeleff. *"Awful! I cannot repeat. How would you pronounce it?"*\*

The terms of her new situation were profitable, but once again, for the second time now, she had to put off her decision. The reason was this. She had hardly received the offer, when she fell ill; and the severity of her illness made everyone conclude that she had caught it from Harry. In the meantime, a temperature as high as in measles, which had put her to bed that very evening and which exceeded 104°, fell precipitously next morning to below 100°. All this proved a mystery which the doctor failed to solve, but it left the poor girl very weak. Now the effects of the attack began to wear off, and the mansion was again shaken once or twice by

\* In English in the original text.

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the thunders of *Aufschwaung*, as in the days when Serezha had not even dreamt of Raskolnikov's dilemmas.

That morning, Mrs. Fresteln took Harry to visit some friends in Klyasma, intending to spend the night there if the weather permitted and the opportunity presented itself. Mr. Fresteln had likewise departed. Half the day passed as though the Frestelns were still at home. Lavrenty, to oblige, had offered to serve Serezha's meal downstairs, but he preferred not to change the established routine of the servants and, without noticing it, dined upstairs at the exact hour and even in his appointed place, second to the right.

It was five in the afternoon, and the Frestelns were still away. Serezha thought, in turn, of the millions and the two hundred roubles, and, thus engrossed, paced the room. Then suddenly he experienced a moment of such acute awareness that, forgetting everything else, he froze to the spot and became vaguely alert. But he could detect absolutely nothing. Only the room, flooded with sunshine, seemed ~~barer~~ and more spacious than before. He could resume his

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interrupted preoccupation. Yet, he did not. He had no ideas left, and had forgotten the subject of his reflections. Then, hastily, he began to grope for at least one verbal concept, for the brain as a whole responds to the meaning of things, just as it does to one's own name, and, awakening from lethargy, renews its service with that lesson which it had temporarily denied us. However this quest led to nothing. It merely increased his vagueness. Only extraneous things pushed their way into his mind.

He suddenly recalled his spring encounter with Kovalenko. And again the falsely promised, non-existent story swam into his conviction as something complete and already composed, and he almost cried out when he realized that here, indeed, was a possible source of money—not the inherited kind but an honest hundred or two—and, realizing all this and drawing the curtain of the middle window to shade the table, he sat down without much reflection to write a letter to the editor. He successfully negotiated the introduction and the initial polite phrases. What he would have done when it came to the substance was destined to remain an absolute

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mystery. For, at that moment, the same strange feeling alerted him. Now he had time to analyze it. The feeling was that of an engulfing emptiness, nostalgic and prolonged. The sensation had to do with the house. It declared the house uninhabited at that moment, that is, empty of any living thing except Serezha and his pre-occupations. "And Torskyold?" he asked, and then remembered that she had not been seen in the house since the previous evening. He noisily pushed his chair aside. Leaving open behind him the doors of the classroom and the nursery, and some other doors, he ran in to the vestibule. In the space beyond the sagging door leading into the yard, the white heat of five-o'clock-afternoon scorched like sand. Looking from above, it appeared to him even more mysterious and sarcophagal.

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"How careless of them!" he thought, passing from chamber to chamber (he did not know everything). "All the windows open, and no one in the house or in the yard. The house could be entered and no one would say no. But why am

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I so vague? Anything might happen while I'm fumbling round." He ran back, dashed down the stairs and ran out of the side door as if the house were on fire. And, as if in answer to a fire alarm, the doors of the servants' quarters banged in the depths of the yard.

"Yegor!" Serezha yelled in a voice not his own at a man who came running to meet him, a man who was chewing a last morsel and wiping his moustache and lips with the edge of an apron, "tell me, I'd be greatly obliged, how can I find the Frenchwoman?" (he did not have the gumption to call her "Frenchie" as the servants very precisely called the Danish woman and all her predecessors). "Be quick, please, Margarita Ottopovna asked me this morning to give her a message and I've only just remembered."

"The window over there!" The caretaker gruffly gulped as he hurriedly finished swallowing. Then, raising his arm and shaking his freed throat, he began chattering in a different vein as to how he could find the place, staring the while not straight at Serezha, but sideways at a nearby mansion.

A wall of this humble three-storied building

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of white-washed brick, which was joined at an angle to the mansion and which was rented from the Frestelns as a hostelry, had been opened to suit the need of the owners and to give admittance from the ground floor of the mansion through a corridor skirting the children's quarters. In this narrow space, separated from the hostelry by a blind wall, there was just a room on each floor. The lodger's window was located on the third floor. "Where did all this happen before?" Serezha wondered as he tramped along the sloping boards of the corridor. He was on the point of remembering, but refrained from probing further because, at that very moment, he came upon a spiral staircase hanging in front of him like an iron snail. Embracing him in its twist, it arrested his rush and made him take breath. But his heart was still beating fast when, spiralling to the end, it brought him straight to the numbered door. Serezha knocked without getting an answer. He pushed the door rather violently, and it crashed against the inner wall without evoking a protest. This sound, more eloquently than anything else, told Serezha that there was nobody in the

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room. He sighed, turned and, bending, gripped the spiral rail, but, remembering the door he had left open, returned to shut it. The door had swung open to the right, and that was where the handle was, but Serezha instead threw a furtive glance to the left and was dumbfounded.

There, on a knitted bedcover, her high heels pointing straight at the intruder, in a smooth black skirt and sprawled athwart the bed like a corpse, festive and stiff, Mrs. Arild lay face down. Her hair looked black, her face bloodless. "Anna, what's the matter with you?" Serezha burst out and choked on a flood of air that gushed in the wake of that exclamation.

He threw himself toward the bed and dropped on his knees before her. With one hand he raised Arild's head and, with the other, began feverishly and awkwardly to grope for her pulse. He pressed the icy sinews of her wrist this way and that without finding the pulse . . . "Lord, O Lord!" sounded in his ears and chest louder than the beat of horses' hooves whilst, staring at the dazzling pallor of her large lifeless eyes, he seemed to be falling somewhere impetuously and endlessly, pulled down by the dead weight



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of her head. He was choking and on the point of fainting himself. But suddenly she recovered consciousness.

*"You friend,"* she muttered vaguely, opening her eyes.

The gift of speech was restored not only to human beings. Everything in the room began to talk. The room was filled with noise as though full of children. The first thing Serezha did was to jump from the floor and shut the door. "Ah, ah!" he said, foolishly repeating these monosyllables as he aimlessly tramped the room, now rushing toward the window, now toward the dressing table. Although the room, which gave north, swam in lilac shadows, one could clearly distinguish the labels of the medicines in any corner, and there was not the slightest need, while searching among the phials and bottles, to carry each one separately to the window light. He did it only to give an outlet to his joy, which required a noisy expression. Arild had already regained full consciousness, and she now obeyed his injunctions only to please him. To please him, she consented to smell the English salts, and the acid ammonia

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penetrated her as immediately as it would any normal person. Her tear-stained face was wrinkled with surprise, her eyebrows arched at an angle, and she pushed away Serezha's hand with renewed energy. He also made her take some Valerian drops. As she drained the water, her teeth knocked against the brim of the glass, and she gasped as children do when they fully express their satisfied need.

"Well, what's with our friends? Have they returned or are they still away?" she enquired, setting the glass on the table and licking her lips; and then, propping the pillow to sit up more comfortably, she asked what time it was.

"I don't know," Serezha replied. "It's probably near five."

"The clock's on the dressing table. Look, please," she said, adding in a tone of surprise, "I don't understand how you can be so vague. You can't miss the clock. And that photograph is Arild. The year before he died."

"A wonderful forehead."

"Yes, isn't that so?"

"And what a fine man! What an astonishing face. It's ten to five."

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“And now please give me the plaid—there it is, on the trunk . . . Thank you, thank you, that’s fine. . . . I’d better lie for a while.”

Serezha, with an effort, swung open the resisting window. The room swam more speciously as if a bell had been tolled. The heavy scent of yellow dandelions, the grassy tenacious odour of red snapdragons invaded the room. The confused screech of starlings darted to the ceiling.

“Here, put this on your forehead,” Serezha suggested, handing Arild a towel soaked in eau de cologne. . . . “Well, how do you feel now?”

“Oh beyond compare. Can’t you see?”

He suddenly felt that he would not have the strength to leave her. And therefore he said:

“I’ll go in a moment. But you can’t stay like this. You might have another attack. You should unbutton your neck and loosen your corset laces. Can you manage that yourself? There is no one else in the house.”

*“You’ll not dare . . .”*

“You misunderstand me. There is no one I can send to you. I said, didn’t I, that I would go,” he interrupted quietly and, dropping his head, slowly without turning, walked to the door.

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She called him on the threshold. He looked back. Propping herself on one elbow, she was holding out her other hand. He approached the foot of the bed.

*"Come near, I did not wish to offend you."*

He went round the bed and sat down on the floor with his feet under him. His pose promised a long and unconstrained chat. But he was so excited, he could not utter a word. And there was nothing to talk about. He was happy not to be under the spiral staircase, but close to her without having to take leave of her at once. She was about to break the oppressive and slightly comic silence. Then he quickly got on his knees, pressed his crossed hands against the edge of the featherbed, and let his head fall upon them. His shoulder blades began to move evenly and rhythmically. He was either crying or laughing, but that was still not clear.

"What is it, what is it! I did not expect that. Stop, aren't you ashamed!" she kept repeating rapidly when his noiseless gasps turned into unrestrained sobs.

However (and she knew this) her words of comfort only encouraged his tears and, stroking

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his head, she connived at new floods of them. He did not restrain himself. Resistance would only have led to a stoppage, but there was a large accumulated charge which he wanted to release as quickly as possible. Oh, how glad he was that all those Sokolniki and Tverskoy-Yamskoys, and all the days and nights of the last two weeks had not stood their ground, but had started moving at last and travelling! He wept as though it was they, and not he, who were being torn. And they really were being whirled away, like logs on a swollen river. He wept as if expecting some purgation from the storm, which had suddenly burst as from a cloud, and from all his worries about the millions. It was as though he expected these tears to influence the further course of his daily life.

Suddenly he raised his head. She saw his face, washed by a mist and, as it were, drifting into it. In a state of some command, like a guardian over himself, he uttered several words, but they were wrapped in the same frowning and remote mist.

"Anna," he said quietly, "do not be hasty in your refusal, I implore. I ask your hand. I know

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it's not the way to say this, but how can I express myself better? Be my wife," he went on even more quietly and firmly, quivering inwardly from the unbearable freshness in which this word was bathed, that he had just used for the first time in his life and that was as large as life itself.

And pausing for a moment to control the smile, which he had scooped up from some particular depth, he frowned and added even more quietly and firmly than before:

"Only don't laugh, I beg you. That would lower you."

He stood up and walked aside. Arild quickly sat up, her feet dangling from the bed. She was inwardly in such a turmoil that, though it was all in order, her dress appeared crumpled and her hair unkempt.

"My dear, my dear, how can you!" she kept saying, trying at each word to rise, but forgetting to do so, and, at each word, spreading her arms in surprise like a guilty person. "You've gone mad. You have no pity. I was unconscious. I am just opening my eyes—do you hear what I am saying? I can barely move them, do you understand that? And suddenly to ask me such

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a question, so bluntly! And don't laugh either. Ah, how you 'agitate me!' she exclaimed in another tone, as though in parenthesis or to herself, and, finding her feet, she quickly ran with this exclamation, as with a gift, to the dressing table, behind which he stood sullenly listening to her, his elbow against the wood, his chin on the palm of his hand

Gripping with both hands the edge, her whole body expressive of portentous conclusions, she continued to speak, splashing him with the light of a gradually overpowering agitation:

"I expected this, it was in the air. I cannot answer you. The answer is in yourself. Perhaps, this will come true one day. And how I would like it to be so! Because . . . because I am not indifferent to you. You, of course, guessed that? No? Is that true? Tell me—didn't you really? How strange. But it's all the same. Well, anyhow, I want you to know it." She faltered and paused for a moment. "But I have been observing you all the time. There is something wrong with you. And do you know, now, at this very moment, there is more of it in you than the situation warrants. Ah, my dear, one does

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not propose like this. It's not just a matter of convention. But enough of that. Listen, answer me one question sincerely as you would your sister. Tell me: is there any shame on your conscience? Oh don't be frightened, for God's sake! Doesn't an unfulfilled promise or a neglected duty leave its mark? But, of course, of course, I assumed it myself. All this is so unlike you. You need not answer—I know: nothing that is not human can be part of you for long . . . But," she drawled thoughtfully, sketching something indefinitely empty in the air with her hand, while her voice sounded weary and hoarse, "but there are things larger than us. Tell me, don't you have something like that inside you? That is a frightening thing in life. It would scare me like a strange presence."

Though she did not stop talking at once, she added nothing more substantial. The yard was empty as before, and the adjacent buildings looked moribund. As before, the starlings swept over them. The end of the day flamed like a mythical battle. The starlings drifted forward like a cloud of slowly quivering arrows and then, suddenly reversing their sharp heads,



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rushed back, screeching. Everything was as before. But the room had grown a trifle darker.

Serezha was silent because he was uncertain of being able to control his voice if he broke the silence. At every attempt to speak, his chin drooped and trembled. He was ashamed to weep alone for his own private reasons, without being able to disburden them on the Moscow countryside. His silence caused Anna extreme annoyance. She was even more dissatisfied with herself. The important thing was that she agreed to everything even though she did not express this in words.

Everything seemed to be slipping unpleasantly through her hands and the fault was hers. As always on such occasions, she thought of herself as a soulless doll and, blaming herself, was ashamed to indulge in the cold rhetoric that her answers were supposed to contain. In order to correct this imaginary sin, and convinced that everything would now take a different turn, she said in a voice that echoed the whole of that evening, that is, in a voice that had developed an affinity with Serezha's:

"I don't know whether you understood me. I

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replied by agreeing with you. I am prepared to wait as long as necessary. But, first of all, you must put yourself in order—you whom I know so little and who probably know yourself only too well. I don't know what I am saying. Those hints sprang up against my will. To guess or surmise—that is your business. Then there is this also: expectation does not come easily to me. But enough of this now or we shall wear each other out."

"Now listen. If you care for me even half as much . . . But what you are doing, well, it wasn't necessary. I beg of you, don't, or you will destroy everything . . . Well, thank you."

"You wanted to say something," he reminded her quietly.

"Yes, of course, I haven't forgotten. I wanted to ask you to go downstairs. Yes, really, listen to me. Go to your room, wash your face, take a walk. You must calm yourself. You don't think so? Well, all right then. Then let me ask you another favour, my poor dear. Go to your room all the same and do wash yourself. You can't appear in public with such a face. Then wait for me; I'll call for you and we'll go for a



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departure, the starlings would assault her. He still had time to avert this violation and to catch up with the vanishing past; it was not too late to begin all over again and bring it to a different conclusion; it was all still possible, but very soon it would not be feasible. Why had he heeded her and left her alone?" "All right. Let us suppose," he responded at the same time, out of that heated Anna series, to other feverish-mechanical thoughts that, unconnectedly, rushed past him. He pulled open the middle-half curtain and drew the end one, which made the light shift and bury the table in shadow so that now, instead of the table, the neighbouring room loomed more brightly, every wall of it, including the very end one; and that was the room through which Anna had to pass in order to reach him. The door of it was wide open. In his preoccupation, he had forgotten to wash his face.

"Well, and Maria. Let's consider her case. Maria has no need of anyone. Maria is immortal, Maria is not a woman," he thought, standing with his back to the table, leaning against the edge with his arms crossed. In his mind's eye,

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with revolting automatism, flashed the empty Institute premises, echoing steps, the unforgetten declarations of the previous summer, and Maria's uncollected bags. The loaded baskets flashed before him like abstract concepts, and the suitcases with their straps and strings could have served as premises for a syllogism. He suffered from these cold images as from a hurricane of festive spirituality, as from a flood of enlightened meaninglessness. Bending his head and crossing his arms, he waited for Anna in a state of irritation and longing, ready to rush to her and seek refuge from this nasty surge of obsessions.

Well, so it was a failure. Godspeed then. While you were trifling and trifling, another got away with it, leaving no trace. Well, God be with him. I don't know him, and I don't want to know him. What if there's no news and no trace. Well, supposing it is like that. Well, that's just fine."

While he was bandying prickly comments with his past, the pleats of his jacket slid to and fro on a sheet of writing paper, the upper part of which had been scribbled on, but two thirds

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of which were blank. He was aware of this, but the letter to Kovalenko also belonged to that extraneous series against which he was tilting.

Suddenly, for the first time in the past year, he realized that he himself had helped Ilyina to clear the apartment and depart abroad. Baltz was a scoundrel (he called him that inwardly). Then at once he felt certain that he had guessed right. His heart contracted. He was cut to the quick, not so much by the rivalry of last year as by the fact that, in Anna's hour, he could still be intetrested in something which had no connection with Anna and which had acquired an inadmissible and, for her, offensive vitality. But, as abruptly, he realized that outside interference might also threaten him this summer unless he became more collected and positive.

He came to some decision and, turning on his heels, scrutinized the room and the table as if seeing them for the first time. The strips of sunset budded with sap and gathered their final crimson. In a couple of places the air had been sawn in two, and glowing shavings fell from the ceiling to the floor. The far end of the room seemed plunged in gloom. Serezha placed a

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packet of writing paper near at hand, and then switched on the electric light. While thus preoccupied, he had completely forgotten his promise to take a stroll with Anna.

"I intend to marry," he wrote to Kovalenko, "and am in desperate need of money. The story which I told you about, I am now rewriting as a play . . . The play will be in verse."

And he began to expound the plot of the story.

"Once upon a time, in the real conditions of our present Russian life, which are so depicted as to give them a wider significance, in the milieu of the leading men of affairs of one of the capitals, a rumour is born, grows and is enriched by all sorts of detail. It is transmitted orally without being checked in the newspapers because it is an illegal matter and in accordance with the recently revised legal code, it has become a criminal matter. It would seem that a man has come on the scene—a man eager to sell himself as a chattel at an auction to the highest bidder—and that the significance and profit of this transaction would become apparent at the auction. There seems to be an element of

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Wilde in this, or something having to do with women—and the buzz of this, though no attempt is made to establish the man's whereabouts, makes the rounds among the young merchants of the sort who model the furnishings of their houses on stage designs and who load their conversation with terms culled from Hindoo spiritual lore. On the appointed day—for the news of the place and the day of the sale had incredibly reached everyone's ears—everyone leaves town, even though afraid of having been made a laughing stock. But curiosity wins and, besides, it is June, and the weather is simply wonderful. It all takes place in a cottage: the cottage is new, and no one has ever been there before. There is a crowd of people, all of the same set: heirs to big fortunes, philosophers, megalomaniacs, collectors, judicious amateurs. Rows of chairs, a platform with a grand piano, its lid propped open, and a small table nearby with a mallet on it. Several three-sectioned windows. At last the man appears . . . He is still very young. Naturally there is some difficulty over the name and, indeed, how can one name a man who is aspiring to become a symbol? However,



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there is a variety of symbols and, since a name must be found for him, let us for the time being label him algebraically—Mr. Y, let us say. It immediately becomes apparent that there will be no fireworks, no circus smell, no Cagliostro, nothing of *The Egyptian* (even) *Nights*, and that the man was born serious and not without a purpose. It is evidently no joke; the gathering will be exposed to something within their common experience, without digressions or fancies, and they will not be able to get out of it. And therefore, with all the simplicity of prose, Mr. Y was greeted with applause. He announced that whoever would make the largest offer for him would acquire the power of life and death over him. That he would take twenty-four hours to dispose of his gain as he had planned, leaving nothing for himself, after which he would begin his complete and incontestable bondage, the duration of which he now entrusted into the hands of his future master; for the latter would not only have the power to use him as he wished, but also to kill him if it so pleased him. He had prepared, he said, a spurious note about his suicide, which would whitewash the mur-

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derer in advance. He was also ready to draw up, when required, any further document intended to cover with his good will anything that might happen to him. 'And now,' Mr. Y declared, 'I shall play and read to you. I shall play something unforeseen, that is impromptu; but the reading will be from a text of my own.' Then a new person walked across the platform and sat down at the table. It was a friend of Mr. Y's. As distinct from his other friends who had bidden him farewell that morning, this particular friend, at Y's request, had remained at his side. This friend loved him no less than his other friends, but, as distinct from them, he did not lose his composure because he did not believe in the realization of Y's whim. He was an officer of the Treasury and an executive of standing. So Y had let him act as auctioneer during this transaction, to which he, the last remaining friend, attached no value. He had remained to help him realize the whim, in whose accomplishment he did not believe, and then, in conclusion, to toast his friend on a long journey according to all the rules of auctioneering art. Then it began to rain. . . ."

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"Then it began to rain," Serezha scribbled on the edge of the eighth page and then transferred his writing from letter paper to quarto. It was a first draft of the kind a man writes only once or twice in a lifetime, taking all night at a sitting. Such drafts inevitably abound in water as an element, foreordained by its very nature to incarnate unvaried and persistently powerful movements. Nothing except the most general idea, unformulated as yet, and devoid of vital detail, settles in the writing of such initial evening outbursts; and the only remarkable feature of such writing is the natural way in which the idea is born out of the circumstances of experience.

The rain was the first detail in the sketch to stop Serezha. He transferred this detail from an octavo to a quarto-sized sheet, and began to amend and erase in an attempt to arrive at the desired effect. In places, he penned words that did not exist in the language. He allowed them to stay temporarily on the paper in the hope that they might, later, guide him through more immediate torrents of rain water into that sort of colloquial speech, which originated from

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the intercourse of enthusiasm and usage. He believed that these runnels, recognized and accepted by all, would flow into his memory; and his anticipated enthusiasm for them dimmed his eyes with tears as if he wore a pair of incorrectly fitted spectacles.

If he had not been sitting, like every writer, at an angle to the table, with his back to both the entrances into the room, or if he had turned his head for the moment to the right, he would have died from fright. Anna stood in the doorway. She vanished, but not at once. Retiring a step or two from the threshold, she lingered in sight and close proximity just as long as she judged it necessary to preserve a balance between faith and superstition. She did not wish to tempt fate either by deliberate delay or blind haste. She was dressed in her outdoor clothes. In her hand she held a tightly furled umbrella because, in the interval, she had not severed her connection with the outside world and had a window in her room. Moreover, when she was about to descend to see Serezha, she very sensibly glanced at the barometer, which indicated stormy weather. Forming like a cloud behind

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Serezha's back, and although dressed in black, she glittered whitely and smokily in a sunset beam of dazzling intensity, which pounded from beneath the grey and lilac storm cloud that pressed down on the gardens of the adjacent street. The torrents of light dissolved Anna as well as the parquet floor, which curled corrosively beneath her like vapour. From two or three movements made by Serezha, Anna, as in the Game of Kings,\* deduced from his delirium her own incorrigible nature. After seeing him move the cushion of his fist across his eye, she turned away, gathered her skirt and, crouching as she walked, in a few long and powerful strides tiptoed out of the classroom. Once in the corridor, she increased her pace a little and dropped her skirt, and this she did while still biting her lips and as noiselessly as before.

To refuse him had involved no labour. Everything happened naturally. The shifting sky had already occupied the window of her room to its full width. From the purple layers of the sky it was clear that she would never arrive un-

\* A card game in which the winner has the right to ride round the room astride the losers.

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drenched at the nearest corner. Anna now felt she must urgently undertake something to escape remaining alone with her fresh and rapidly suppurating nostalgia. The mere notion of being left alone all night in her room made her turn icy with horror. What would become of her if she had another attack? Running through the yard into the street, she hired a cab with its hood already raised. She drove to Chernyshevsky street, where an English friend of hers lived, hoping that the storm would continue to rage and make it impossible for her to return home, and that her friend would be obliged to put her up for the night.

“ . . . So it began to rain outside the cottage,” Serezha scribbled. “And this is what took place in front of the windows. The ancient birch trees set their leaves free in whole swarms and waved them a ceremonious farewell from the hillock. In the meantime, fresh flurries of leaves, becoming entangled in their hair, whirled away and thinned out in white gusts. Having waved them on and lost them from sight, the birches swung toward the cottage. Darkness fell, and, just before the first clap of thunder pealed, Mr.

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Y began to play on the grand piano inside.

"For his theme, Mr. Y picked the nocturnal sky as it looks when it emerges from the bath-house, clad in the kashmir down of clouds, in the vitriol-and-*laudanum* vapour of the wind-blown forest, with a strong rush of stars washed clean to their last chink and looking larger. The glitter of these drops, which can never be detached from space however much they may try to break away, was already strung above the music-loud forest. Now, running his fingers along the keyboard, Mr. Y abandoned and then resumed the theme, surrendered it to oblivion and imposed it on the memory. The window-panes are flattened torrents of mercurial chill; with armfuls of enormous air, the birch trees move before the windows; and everywhere litter showers on them and on the tufted water spouts, while the music weighs out a bow to right and left, always promising us something more on the way.

"And what is so extraordinary, every time anyone attempted to doubt the honesty of the statement, the player splashed the doubter with some unexpected miracle of sound. It is the

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miracle of his own voice, that is, the miracle of their tomorrow's way of feeling and remembering. The force of this miracle is such that, jokingly, it can cleave the basin of the piano and, at the same instant, crush the bones of the trading class and the Vienna chairs; and this miracle scatters fast silver speech and sounds all the quieter, the more frequently and rapidly it is repeated.

"He read in exactly the same way. He expressed himself thus: 'I shall read you so many passages of blank verse, so many columns of rhymed quatrains'. And again, each time anyone thought it did not much matter, which way these carpet fictions fell—head or feet South or North of the Pole, then descriptions and similes of prodigious magnetic sensitivity manifested themselves. Those were images, miracles of the word, that is, examples of complete and arrowlike submission to the earth. That was the direction which their future morality, their bent for truth, would follow tomorrow.

"But how agonizingly this man appeared to experience all this. It was as if someone kept showing him the earth and then hiding it in



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his sleeve, and interpreted living beauty as a limiting distinction between existence and non-existence. His novelty consisted in this, that he had grasped and raised to a constant poetic symptom this contrast, which was conceivable only for an instant. But where could he have seen these appearances and disappearances? Was it not the voice of mankind that had told him of an earth ever flitting in a succession of generations?

"All this was, fully and without cuts, unapplied art; from the whispering frontiers, it talked of infinities; everything was born of the richest, bottomlessly sincere, terrestrial poverty. He interspersed his reading with playing: he heard the rustle of French phrases; and he was enveloped in scent. In low tones, he was requested to forget about everything else and to continue only the piece he was performing and not to interrupt it—but this was not what he wanted.

"Then he rose and addressed them, saying that their love touched him, but their love was not enough. Otherwise, they would have remembered that they were at an auction and why he

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had brought them together. He said that he could not reveal his plans to them, for they would intervene again as they had done so many times, and suggest another solution and another form of help, possibly even a more generous one, but necessarily incomplete and not of the kind his heart had prompted. That he had no current value in that large issue in which man had been printed. That he must make himself a commodity of exchange, and they must help him in this. They might think his project a lamentable fantasy. Very well. But they must either hear him entirely or not at all. If they heard him, then let them blindly submit to him. He resumed his playing and reading; in the intervals, numerals crackled, and work was found for his friend's idle hands and throat; and then, after twenty minutes of mad fever and in the very heat of glycerine hoarseness, on the ultimate crest of unparalleled perspiration, he fell to the lot of one of the most sincere amateurs, a person of the strictest principles, and a renowned philanthropist. But it was not at once, not that very evening, that this man allowed him the taste of freedom. . . ."

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### V

Needless to say, this is not an original of Serezha's draft. He himself did not complete it. There was much on his mind that was never recorded on paper. He was just pondering a scene of city riots when Mrs. Fresteln, drenched to the skin and furious, burst into the room, dragging after her the reluctant Harry, who was evidently abashed at the prospect of the imminent scandal.

Serezha had assumed in his plot that, on the third day, let us say, after the transaction, a conversation of major importance and perspicuity would take place between the philanthropist and his chattel. He had conceived that, having lodged Mr. Y separately and having exhausted him by over-luxurious treatment, and himself—by worry, the rich patron could no longer bear the boredom and would call on Mr. Y with the request that, since he did not know how to employ him more worthily, he depart to the four corners of the world. This Mr. Y would

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refuse to do. On the night of this conversation news would be brought to the country of the riots which had just occurred in the city and which had begun with acts of violence in the very neighbourhood where Mr. Y had scattered his millions. This news would discourage both of them: Mr. Y in particular because, in the acts of violence that had gained such wide notoriety, he would detect a return to the past, whereas he had hoped for an enigmatic renewal, that is, a complete and irreversible renaissance. Only then would he have consented to depart. . . .

"No, it's unbelievable. I almost broke my umbrella!" Mrs. Fresteln exclaimed. "*Je l'admets à l'égard des domestiques, mais qu'en ai-je à penser si . .* But, heavens, what's the matter with you, Harry? Are you sick? I'm a fine one! Let me look at you for a minute. Harry, you must go to bed immediately, immediately! Varya, you will rub him down with vodka, and we'll talk tomorrow. There's no point in sniffing now, you should have thought of it before. Go now, Harry. The heels, that's important, the heels, and also rub his chest with turpen-

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time. Tomorrow there will be time for affection; for you and for Lavrenty Nikitich, but Mrs. Arild will have to give an account of herself."

"What's she done?" Serezha asked.

"At last! I didn't want to mention it in their presence. I didn't notice anything at first. Don't be angry. Are you having any unpleasantness? Anything to do with the family?"

"Excuse me all the same, but how has the Missis displeased you?

"What Missis? I don't understand anything. You're blushing! Aha, so that's it! So, so. Well, all right. Yes that's it—regarding my maid. She hasn't been home since the morning. She left the premises like the rest of the servants. But the others at least thought better of it in the evening. . . ."

"And Mrs. Arild?"

"But that's not decent. How do I know where Mrs. Arild is spending the night? *Suis-je sa confidente?* That is why I have stopped in here, my dear Sergey Osipovich. I'd ask you, my darling, to see to it that Harry packs his games and school books tomorrow morning. Let him pack them himself as best he can. Of course you

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will afterwards rearrange everything without letting on that it was part of your plan. I feel you want to ask me about the linen and the other things? Varya is responsible for all that and it does not concern you. I believe that, where possible, children should be given the illusion of a certain independence. Here even appearances stimulate beneficial habits. In addition, I should like you, in the future, to devote more attention to him. In your place, I'd lower the lamp a little. Allow me! Well, just like this, don't you think? Isn't it really better than the way you had it? But I'm afraid of catching cold. We leave the day after tomorrow. Good night!"

\* \* \*

One day, in the early days of his acquaintance with Arild, Serezha began discussing Moscow with her and checking her knowledge of that city. Besides the Kremlin, which she had sufficiently examined, she named a few other sections inhabited by her acquaintances. Of those names he now remembered only two: the Sadovaya-Kudrinskaya and Chernyshevsky

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streets. Discarding the forgotten directions, as though Anna's choice were as limited as his memory, he was now ready to guarantee that Anna was spending the night at Sadovaya. He was convinced of this, because that meant complete frustration. To find her at this hour in such a large street, without the faintest notion where or in whose apartment to seek her, was impossible. Chernyshevsky street was another matter, but it was unlikely that she would be there according to the whole trend of his depression which, like a dog, ran ahead of him on the pavement and, struggling to escape, dragged him after it. He would have certainly found her in Chernyshevsky street if only he could have imagined that the living Anna, of her own free will, was indeed in that place where it was merely his desire (and what strong desire!) to situate her. Convinced of failure, he hurried to test with his own eyes this non-destined possibility, because he was in a state when the heart would rather gnaw the hard core of hopelessness than remain inactive.

It was early morning, overcast and chilly. The nocturnal rain had just ceased. At each

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step the sparkle of the silverhued poplar trees kindled above the almost black grey of the drenched granite. The dark sky was sprinkled with their whitish leaves as with milk. Their felled leaves speckled the pavement together with soiled scraps of torn receipts. It seemed as if the storm before departing, had imposed upon these trees the duty of examining the after-effects, and left in their fresh grey hands the whole of that tangled morning so full of surprises.

On Sundays Anna used to attend the service in the Anglican church. Serezha recalled her telling him that one of her acquaintances lived somewhere in the vicinity. Accordingly, full of his preoccupations, he placed himself right opposite the church.

He stared vacantly at the open windows of the dormant vicarage, and his heart gulpingly picked on morsels of the scene, greedily gobbling the damp bricks of the buildings and the moist foliage of the trees. His anxious glances likewise crunched the air which, avoiding his lungs, passed softly into some other unknown region of his body.



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In order not to attract anyone's suspicion on account of the early hour, Serezha periodically strolled down the full length of the street. Two sounds only disturbed its drowsy quiet: Serezha's footsteps and the throb of some machine in the vicinity. That was the rotary press in the printing works of *The Russian News*. Serezha felt all bruised inside: he was breathless for the wealth which he should have absorbed, but was hardly able to do.

The force, which had infinitely expanded his sensation, was the absolutely literal nature of his passion, namely, that quality of it, thanks to which the tongue seethes in images, metaphors and, even more, in enigmatic forms that escape analysis. Needless to say, the whole street with its unbroken gloom had become wholly and roundly identical with Anna. Here Serezha was not alone, and he knew that. And who, in truth, has not experienced this! However, the feeling was more spacious and precise, and here ended any assistance from friends or predecessors. He saw how painful and difficult it was for Anna to be the city morning, how much the superhuman worth of nature cost her. She

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gloried silently in his presence and did not appeal for his aid. Dying with longing for the real Arild, for all this splendour in its briefest and most precious abstraction, he watched how, swathed in poplars as in ice-packed towels, she was sucked into the clouds and slowly threw back her brick Gothic towers. This brick of purplish non-Russian baking looked as if it had been for some reason imported from Scotland.

A man in an overcoat and soft felt hat emerged from the newspaper office. Without turning his head, he walked in the direction of Nikitskaya. Not to arouse his suspicion if he should glance back, Serezha crossed from the newspaper pavement to the Scottish one and strode in the direction of the Tverskaya. Some twenty paces from the church he saw Arild inside a large-windowed room. At that very moment she had come to the window. When they had recovered from the shock, they began to talk in hushed tones as if in the presence of sleeping people. This they did because of Anna's friend. Serezha stood in the middle of the pavement. It seemed they were talking in whispers so as not to rouse the city.

\* \* \*

The edges of the featherbed fluttered most pleasantly and, reminiscent somehow of paschal egg-rolling, a rotund chief-conductor rolled down the corridor in boots and wide breeches, a round cap on his head and a whistle dangling from a strap. He perspired in his winter uniform and, to comfort himself on the way, adjusted his strict pince-nez. It surprised one by its minuteness amid the large beads of sweat that dotted his whole face and made it resemble a slice of Swiss cheese. If he had happened to observe Serezha's pose in a compartment of a different

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class, he would have surely nudged him or, in some other manner, roused him from oblivion. Serezha was drowsing with his elbows against the edge of the lowered window. He drowsed and then woke, yawned, admired the landscape, and rubbed his eyes. He put his head out of the window and bawled melodies which Arild had once played, but no one heard his bellowing. Whenever the train came out of a curve into the straight, a solid immobile current of air imposed itself upon the corridor. Having run and panted their fill, the wild doors of the end platforms and the toilets spread their wings and, to the roar of increasing speed, it was wonderful to feel that one was less in a draught than just part of a straining bird with a Schumann aria in one's soul.

It was not the heat alone that drove him out of his compartment. He felt uncomfortable in the company of the Frestelns'. It required a week or two more for their impaired relations to become normal again. He blamed Margarita Ottopovna least of all for their deterioration. He admitted that, even if he were her adopted son and she owed him some leniency and indul-

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gence, there was some cause for her despair during the recent commotion before their departure.

After her last nocturnal reprimand, it had pleased him to absent himself the whole day on the very eve of the departure, knowing full well what a Sodom would reign in the household early next morning.

"The blinds!" someone would unexpectedly squeal and miraculously materialize himself, like a living person, out of pieces of matting. "Yegor, the blinds! Why didn't you! . . ."

"What about the blinds?"

"What's that, you fool! Are they to stay here, do you think?"

"Will anything happen to them?"

"And did you beat the dust out of them?"

"May the rain drench you, Laventry. Leave me alone!"

"Varya, my dear, this is not an outing, you know."

\* \* \*

. . . But, in the end, the devil take her, that Arild. She was to be pitied, of course: a worth-

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less intriguing woman, but what was to be done once the scythe had struck stone. But, if it came to that, it would be a different argument; and there was a human way of doing everything. He had seen her off on the 5.45 train from the Bryansk station—and that was all! And he had managed it so that not a soul at home could tell where he had been or what he had lost. On the contrary, everyone would think: there's a real man, a decent self-respecting man, but that was obviously retrogression, for everything now was different. He had to shut himself off, you see, from the leave-taking and he's not embarrassed at their hours-long scrutiny . . . at their curiosity to see whether he's adapting himself and getting accustomed. Well, what's one to do? Dismiss him? . . . But how dismiss him when there was so much confusion all round and when it was absolutely clear from what had happened that his salary was not just for fun. But then, if you please, a job was no joke either and one must value it. In his justification, it might be said that a new decadent expression had been coined—"to experience." However, to experience or to expose one's secrets to ex-


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ternal scrutiny could probably be done in a human way, whereas in his case, the morning after one is face to face with an absolutely unrecognizable and unsuitable man, a very Christ of passivity: if it were seriously proposed, he would drive nails into a box with his head; but, alas, a household requires anything but that, and such is not the function of a tutor in a decent family. . . . And now they were traveling and he with them. Why was he with them? But how dismiss him?

In Tula they missed their connection just as the train pulled in at the station and, with horror, they saw their connection train running off at an angle in the direction of Kaluga. That night was horrible . . . But they were rewarded for their ten-hour torment. About an hour ago a long distance express came by through Tula, and they were now installed in it more comfortably than they could have been in their local night train. Anton Karlovich and Harry were sleeping, but they, poor wretches, would have to be wakened in twenty minutes.

The chief conductor found the carriage to his liking, for he kept reappearing. The land-

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scape was really remarkable. For example, look at it this very moment when, frozen at full speed, the noisy, dirty train floated and seemed to repose upon a spaciouly spread arch of sheer and blazing sand, while opposite the embankment, far beyond the flood meadows, a large and curly country house seemed to float at rest upon a barely quivering hillock. When less than fifteen miles remained, one might have thought this was already Roukhlovo: the white gleams of the manor house and the railings of the park, crumpled by the indentations of the hill, on which it seemed to have been placed like a necklace that had been unclasped—all this seemed to be an exact copy of what he had been told. The park contained many silver poplar trees. "Dear ones!" Serezha whispered and, closing his eyes, exposed his hair to the gallop of the oncoming wind.

\* \* \*

So this was why men had need of the word "happiness." Although they had merely talked, and he had merely shared her worries and had helped her to prepare for the journey . . . al-



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though they would experience another, more complete proximity . . . yet they would never be closer than they had been during those unforgettable ten hours. Everything in the world had been understood; nothing more was left to grasp. All that remained was to live, that is, to chop understanding with one's hands and to wallow in it; all that remained was to please it, just as it had pleased them—what was spread out all round them with railways lining its face and terms. What happiness!

But how lucky that she had spoken of her family! How easily this might not have happened. Wretches! a lot they understood about what debases or ennobles a family tree. But another time of her unfortunate father (a remarkable case!). Serezha now understood where she had acquired her wide knowledge, which made her seem twice as old and ten times more austere. That was all inherited. It explained her calm mastery of it all. She had no need to be amazed at herself or to seek loud fame for her gifts. As a young girl, she had had it anyway, and it was indeed widespread.

Her ancestors were of Scottish descent. Mary

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Stuart had been mentioned in this connection. And now it was impossible not to feel that this name in particular had been missing all that morning in the overcast Chernyshevsky street.

But, at last, the strict chief-conductor nudged the deafened passenger and warned him and his fellow-travellers that they must descend at the next stop.

This was the way, then, people had moved from place to place that last summer when life still appeared to pay heed to individuals, and when it was easier and more natural to love than to hate.

\* \* \*

Serezha stretched himself, fidgeted and began to yawn uncontrollably. Suddenly this stopped. Alertly he raised himself on his elbow and glanced about him soberly and rapidly. The reflection of a streetlamp splashed the floor. "Winter," he thought at once, "and this is my first dream at Natasha's in Ousolie." Fortunately, no one had observed his very animal awakening. And—ah!—there was something else he must not forget. He had dreamt of some-

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thing formless and, whatever it was, it still made his head ache. More remarkable still, this nonsense had a name while he saw it. "Lemokh," it was called. But what did that mean? One thing was certain: he must get up. His appetite was wolfish, and he hoped that he had not overslept the guests.

In a minute he was already drowning in his brother-in-law's frieze embraces, which smelled strongly of iodine. The latter still held a tin-opener in his fist when he rushed to greet Serezha with his arm fully extended. This, together with the hearing aid protruding from his pocket like tangibly materialized sincerity, somewhat spoiled the sweetness of their embraces. And the opening of the tins could not be renewed with the previous expertise and went lame. Questions, blunt and abrupt, showered across the tins. Serezha stood there, feeling glad and puzzled why one should play the fool when one could be a natural fool without trying. They did not like each other.

On the table stood a neat row of vigorous, freshly awakened vodka glasses. And a complex assortment of wind and percussion snacks made

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the eyes beam. Above them, conductor-like towered black bottles of wine, ready at any moment to crash out and wave on a deafening overture to the accompaniment of all kinds of laughter and puns. The spectacle was all the more impressive because the sale of wine had been prohibited throughout Russia, but the factory evidently lived as an autonomous Republic.

It was already late, and the children could only be seen in bed.

The whole room seemed to swim in brandy. Whether it was the effect of light or the furniture, the floor appeared to have been polished not with wax, but rosin, and his slithering feet felt beneath them not the waxed-over splinters, but glued and, as it were, stained hair. All things with facets and any play of light were flooded by the hot yellow of the furnishings ("Karelian birch tree, what are you thinking?" Kalyazin sang lyingly for some reason), as with lemon cordial. Serezha too possessed this quality. According to his calculation, the piercingly lighted house should have looked like a bearish blue-white night of minute proportions, full of camphor balls blown up among the snowdrifts.

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“Aha, there’s a real frost! I’m glad!” he exclaimed, standing behind the fold of a curtain and staring into the darkness.

“H’m . . . yes, it’s freezing hard,” the brother-in-law grunted, wiping his sauce-ambered fingers with a handkerchief.

“I haven’t any snow-boots with me. I forgot to bring them or, rather, to buy them.”

“That can be put right. You can get them here. But what are we talking about, pray? So to speak, man is here, so to speak. . . . Nelma’s a Siberian fish. And there’s also the Maksun. Have you heard of them, brother? No? Well, I knew you’d never heard of them.”

Serezha grew more and more lighthearted, and it is difficult to tell what he might not have done. But a vague confused trampling of feet made itself heard in the corridor. There people were taking off their coats. Soon there came into the dining room, all flushed from the frost, Natasha and a girl Serezha did not know, and also a dry, definite and very alert man, whom Serezha rushed to meet ahead of Kalyazin and whom he greeted effusively, joyfully and almost apprehensively. Then all the gaiety dropped

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away from him. In the first place, he knew this man and, besides, he was confronting something tall and alien that devalued Serezha from head to foot. It was the personification of the masculine spirit of fact, the most modest and the most terrible of spirits.

"And how's your brother?" Serezha began in confusion and then stopped.

"He's still alive," Lemokh replied. "He was wounded in the foot. He's convalescing with me. I'll probably be able to fix him up at home. Glad to see you. And how are you, Pavel Pavlovich?"

"Just imagine," Serezha mumbled even more distractedly, "he may have concealed it for military reasons, but not one of us realized it was the mobilization. Everyone thought it was the manoeuvres. I'm sorry but I don't know what they call those training tactics. Anyhow, we all thought it was merely routine exercise. But they were already being transported to the front. In a word, I saw them in July two summers ago. And just think, their detachment was going by in barges and they were moored for the night near the estate where I was employed as

"Yes, I know about your conversation with my brother. He told me about it."

But what Serezha would not admit was that he had failed to ask Lemokh his name the night they met.

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